NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 06827937 5

PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

28 Ap 05

Potts

The Methodist Pulpit

The Upward Leading

James Henry Potts

The Upward Leading

Pulpit Talks Under Various Auspices

By

JAMES HENRY POTTS

CINCINNATI: JENNINGS AND GRAHAM
NEW YORK: EATON AND MAINS

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
343852
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1905

COPYRIGHT, 1905, BY
JENNINGS AND GRAHAM

PRELUDE.

PITIFUL indeed were man's estate without the UPWARD LEADING.

His whole head sick, his heart faint, his eyes blinded, his tongue full of iniquity, his hands palsied by evil, his feet fast in the clay, what were his hope?

But there is a Deliverer. He comes from on high. His hands are pierced. His head is crowned with thorns. His raiment is crimson. HE dies.

Anon He revives again, and becomes the Leader of men. His eyes are lifted toward the Throne. His lips breathe benedictions. His heart is full of grace. His feet are pillars of fire. He travels in the greatness of His strength, and His steppings are heavenward.

To follow Him is to find safe footing, joyous trusting, progressive living, and triumphant dying.

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	The Mystery of Iniquity, - -	9
II.	The World's Peerless Repeater,	31
III.	The Truth that Conquers, -	51
IV.	A Nut for Despisers to Crack, -	60
V.	Death, Life, Peace, - - -	75
VI.	The Purpose of Preaching, -	88
VII.	The Christian's Secret of a Satisfied Life, - - -	104
VIII.	A Pleasant Final Adieu, - -	118

I.

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work."
—I THESS. II, 7.

THE "mystery of iniquity" is the antithesis of the "mystery of godliness." Both phrases are Scriptural, and both contain a world of meaning.

The mystery of godliness embraces the redemption of Christ, which mystery even the angels desired to look into. It embraces the regeneration of a human soul, which, like the coming and going of the wind, contains unfathomable mysteries. It embraces all those great truths connected with the Christian scheme, so many of which are not discoverable by science or human skill. They are spiritually discerned.

The mystery of iniquity, on the other hand, embraces the workings of Satanic power, the cunning devices of wicked men, and all those unsolvable problems connected with the strange moral history

of our race and its present status as related to the revealed standard of righteousness.

There is as much mystery in evil as in good, and perhaps more. Goodness is known to be beneficial to man. It promotes health, happiness, and pleasing prospect. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The only real mystery about it is that men do not naturally seek it, embrace it, love it, and establish it on earth. What is it that alienates man from God; that causes him to hold the truth in unrighteousness, and pursue evil to his own death? What has God done that man should hate His character, neglect His service, disobey His laws, grieve His Spirit, and trample under foot the blood of His covenant? Can you answer that question? Is there not a world of mystery in it? However you may view it, whatever you may think of the principles involved, the facts connected with religion and life, the world over and throughout all time, are inscrutably mysterious.

Paul says, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." The word "already" hints at an unknown distance of origin and development of the strange power which has made for man's overthrow. The Greek of "iniquity" is lawlessness, defiant rejection

of God's law. It is elsewhere called "the man of sin," whose advent and work in the world are as old as history and as damaging as hell.

It is supposed that the apostle designed to make particular application of the mystery-working iniquity to the character and designs of Antichrist, the lawless one, whose coming is the caricature, the black shadow of Christ; whose ambition is to undo the work of Christ; whose plan is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Possibly, also, there are ecclesiastical and national questions intermingled with the apostle's references, which it would be out of my province to-day to consider.

Some writers think that the expression "mystery of iniquity" refers to Gnosticism and other such doctrinal errors as were springing up about that time, and which in due season accomplished so much mischief in the thoughts and deeds of men. Others think that the allusion is to the demon of Romish idolatry and superstition which in course of time took possession of the Christian Church, and visited upon the race that awful midnight of the Dark Ages. Others still conceive that the reference is to certain

elements of Judaism which early infected Christianity, giving no end of trouble to those who sought the truth, and nothing but the truth, in the light and life of Christ. Lightfoot says that the mystery of iniquity can not be understood save in the light of the facts connected with the downfall of Judaism with all its deceivers, false Christs, Antichrist, and lying prophets. Be this as it may, I am disposed to accept the phrase as applicable to everything that setteth itself up in opposition to God. It is one and the same impurity diffusing itself over many ages, and assuming such forms and methods as are best adapted to the current time and place.

Iniquity is a system of mysteries. In the Bible sense, a mystery is not necessarily something which remains always a secret, but that which is for a while hidden, and then in due time is manifested. Some forms of mystery are open, and others are concealed. Very often those that are seemingly open are clothed with minor mysteries as inscrutable as any.

Iniquity has various forms and disguises. It has some vile forms in the Old World which we do not yet feel in the New. France has forms of it unknown in Germany. Spain has outcroppings of it unfelt in England. Every nation, sooner or

later, experiences developments of this mystic power of evil which mar its happiness and threaten its very life.

I for one moment come to speak of certain phases of iniquity at work against our weal in public affairs here in America.

We are a strong nation.

Our resources are inexhaustible.

We have much inherent vitality.

We love our country, and would die, if need be, in its defense. If a foreign power should invade us we would repel it, and perhaps crush it as a penalty for its impertinence.

But we are not a pure nation. We may be as good as any others, and better than most, but we are not pure. Evil is at work in our national life, sapping the secret springs of our vitality. We count ourselves safe from foreign invasion, but we are not secure from the ravages of a secret foe which is subtly laying schemes for our decadence or overthrow.

Let me not hint that our national affairs are worse than formerly. These are not the only days when conscientious men have descried dangers. Writing from Philadelphia in 1776, while Congress was in session, John Adams said to his wife that

the spirit of venality then prevalent was the "most dreadful and alarming enemy America had to oppose. It is," said he, "as rapacious and insatiable as the grave. If God Almighty does not interfere by His grace to control this universal idolatry to the mammon of unrighteousness, we shall be given up to the chastisements of His judgments. I am ashamed of the age I live in."

So it has ever been. Every generation has had its evils to confront, and if each generation had only destroyed its own, the world would have made more rapid headway toward the goal of a righteous state. One of the most serious features of current national iniquity is the growing indifference of respectable men to politics, and the consequently increased activity and influence of unprincipled demagogues. In Europe public life is higher in tone than private life. In America the contrary is true. It would not be profitable to exchange our mistakes for theirs, but it would be advantageous to correct our unhappy error. Woe to our nation when every capable and worthy man is so engrossed in private business that he is willing to turn over to sharpers, scoundrels, and idiots the management of public affairs! In no other country on earth does so much contempt attach to the word "politician" as in our own youthful, wealthy, hustling America.

There is enough political corruption in the city of New York, could it be transformed into literal mud, to sink ten thousand ocean steamers five thousand fathoms deep, and hold them anchored there until doomsday and beyond. And it would be worth to our nation a million times the value of the ships could the corruption be thus disposed of.

But New York is not the only rotten city. It may be the center, but it is by no means the circumference of demagogism and decayed politics.

We are a nation of idolaters. Our idols are our parties, and these parties are big or little to us accordingly as we are blinded to their faults. If you want to know the faults of a political party, read the opposition press. If you want to ignore its detestable features, take it as you do a pill,—shut your eyes and swallow.

Another mystery of iniquity at work among us is the insane scramble for material possessions. The future wealth of America is a quantity that can not be measured, and the passion to share in it has grown to the proportions of a wicked frenzy. Fraud is palliated. Gambling is encouraged. Robbery is winked at. Honesty is considered by many a Sunday-school fad. Mammonism is undermining our security. Greed is devouring our integrity. A

Mount Pelee of destruction may follow our national carelessness as to the violation of God's law.

And what a mystery this unprincipled ambition is! Wealth begets disappointment and vexation in some, and pride and austerity in others. It creates hurtful social distinctions, and awakens animosities betwixt rich and poor. It makes the most amiable people almost incapable of measuring the value of anything except by the money standard. It renders the rich a privileged class, and human nature never fails to abuse a social privilege. "As a tropical climate breeds snakes, so does wealth breed vice, and misery feeds it."

Another mystery of iniquity which is playing havoc with the national conscience is the fostering care given to the diabolical liquor-traffic. The principle of license has hardened the national heart until it refuses to stand appalled at depths of depravity and woe which would make Satan himself tremble. The lamented Governor Bagley, of Michigan, once said that intemperance, more than all other evils, threatens the life of the nation and the moral character of every citizen.

Two billions a year spent in drunkenness!

One hundred thousand souls a year hurled into hell!

Millions of citizens demoralized, and millions more involved in suffering that finite rules can not measure.

Lord Macaulay relates that during the memorable siege of Londonderry the soldiers became so perfectly hardened by familiarity with the dreadful scenes wrought by famine and plague that they finally could sit down on the ghastly bodies of their dead comrades and utter hideous jokes mingled with profanity and loud laughter. Thus the melancholy spectacle presented by the poor victims of strong drink is so constantly and widely before the public eye that the finer feelings of humanity become blunted and dead.

"The family circle is the type of heaven; let drunkenness come in, and it becomes the type of hell." Rum so brutalizes a man that the surroundings of the fireside and the quiet, smooth, and sweet enjoyments of the family circle have no charm for him. The tender voice of the devoted wife he has sworn to love and cherish has no music in his ear. The merry prattle of innocent children, for whose existence he is responsible, has no inspiration for his heartless nature. For him there is no home but the rum-hole, the gambling hell, or the resort of vice, and if he can find the three in one the better he is

suited. He is the enemy of every good institution. The Church loses twenty thousand members every year through this beastly habit. Every noble organization has its victims, and every worthy profession sustains its dreadful losses through this iniquitous mystery.

But rum is not the only road to ruin. There are secret bypaths as well as broad boulevards over which men travel, as if led by demons, to their everlasting destruction.

Man is a born worker of iniquity. He is the only creature that works at evil as at a trade. Other creatures may tear and slay, but their ravages are in keeping with their natures and in the regular order of their lives. Man was not created a brute. His hands were not formed with claws to tear with, nor his feet with hoofs to crush with. He has reasoning faculties and a moral nature. He can perpetuate his life without harming others of his kind. He can promote his own happiness without destroying the happiness of others.

Yet the brutal things which man need not do, he does. He need not murder to live; yet his feet are swift to shed blood. He need not pillage and destroy; yet destruction and misery are in his ways, and the way of peace has he not known. Since the

death of righteous Abel down to the latest murder, the history of man is marked by violence, rapine, oppression, tyranny, and slaughter.

What a criminal record has our present age! What unnumbered crimes have come to light! What unbounded iniquity still remains concealed! No land is free, no generation exempt.

Our own country is full of violence. Strong men are killed. Helpless women are slaughtered. Whole families are ushered into eternity together. Red-handed assassins are all around us. Mobs can be stirred up in any city. The law is powerless to preserve order. The South is full of oppression and savagery. The North has too much of the same element to make our remonstrances against Southern brutality effective.

In New York City alone about seventy-five thousand persons are annually brought before the police courts charged with crime. Michigan has one of the most unenviable murder records of any State in the Union. The fairest city in America is full of thieves. Crimes against virtue are chronicled with alarming frequency, and summary punishment in defiance of law almost every day disgraces the good name of the land we love.

What does it all mean? It means that man un-

helped, unrestrained, unsaved, is an iniquitous monster, whose moral record has cursed the earth.

It is affirmed that every iniquitous heart has a dark chamber, an unlighted corner, into which no human being, friend or foe, is permitted to gaze. And some of these heart-chambers are full of ghostly forms of evil—hidden mysteries of iniquity—troublesome to the conscience, burdensome to the memory in waking hours, and startling to the apprehension in the night visions. And these hidden iniquities are observable in the moral nature, in the contrary and hurtful things which they prompt the person to say or do.

A man knows, for instance, that ample provision is made for his well-being, yet he deliberately chooses what is pernicious and productive of misery. He admits that virtue is better for him than vice, and then chooses vice. He knows that purity is better for him than impurity, and still he clings to impurity. Light has come into the world, and he heartily approves it, but chooses darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. And he is so mysteriously infatuated that he chooses the society of enemies rather than friends, and the bondage of sin rather than the freedom of the Gospel. And the memory is so affected by it that good impressions,

good instructions, and good experience are forgotten, or they are so nearly erased from the memory that they have no influence for good. And the affections and affinities are so debased that they cling only to what is vile, and they turn with loathing and hatred from what is pure and noble. Its results are observed in the body,—in corrupting the tastes, in fostering appetites and passions, so that man is literally driven to seek and use what will disgrace and ruin him. And although knowing full well the tendencies of vicious indulgences, still their love of evil is stronger than their love of life or their fear of death, and "they give themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness."

It is mysterious how completely iniquity subjugates those who are devoted to it. It makes such drafts upon the vital forces that they are soon exhausted. "For the wicked do not live out half their days." And it leaves its insignia upon the person. It advertises itself through the eye, the features, the breath or habits, so that the particular vice to which a man is addicted may be known to all; and in this spiritual bondage there is no power to escape or desire to escape. For if there is a desire for relief in the sinner's heart it had a higher origin than iniquity. Sin never inspired such a desire, and it

was never entertained by Satan's consent. The mystery of iniquity thus infuses and enfolds and controls the sinner, leaving no capacity or desire or hope for relief. And this is not an extreme view. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Here is a young man who from earliest responsible life yields himself a servant to obey the lusts of the flesh. He indulges the natural propensity which he finds within himself to brood over all forms of corrupt imaginations—foul visions of lust and folly —until his whole mental nature is polluted and his spiritual faculties paralyzed. Perhaps he gives a spur to his own evil inclinations by poring over the pages of printed filth and listening to the pernicious recitals of abandoned men. Iniquity in him reaches a monstrous development. Evil concupiscence is the vile fountain whence all the streams of base desire, unholy impulse, and reckless actions flow. A polluted imagination is the raging furnace from which emanate sinful emotions and depraved suggestions like so many sparks, setting on fire the course of nature and creating in himself and in companions around him a foregleam of hell's consuming fires,

burning up all that is good in his heart, and burning in, deeply and permanently, all that is corrupt, brutal, sensual, devilish.

It is said that on some of the walls in the ruins of Pompeii were found images and superscriptions too foul for public view, too demoniacal and obscene for respectable vision. So with the walls and inner chambers of iniquitous hearts. Deep down below the rubbish, or possibly below the fair exterior (for many of the dirtiest men affect the cleanest outward deportment)—down below the outside, the company side, are thoughts, fancies, desires, and imaginations as dark and filthy, as corrupting, as fiendish, as low, and as hellish as ever were nourished in the bosom of any creature on earth or in the pit beneath. And it is impossible that such pollution can be carried in the mind without staining the physical nature and destroying the spiritual. Those instincts and powers given of God for noble ends are prostituted and indulged until perversion ensues, the vitalities are sapped, the moral forces are weakened, the tissues are injured, and the entire life becomes wrecked. Long continued, such practices affect the mental powers, weakening the memory, dethroning the reason, and driving the victim to despair.

Closely connected with this secret perversion of

the sexual instincts and powers are certain social and domestic crimes which, among high authorities, have created alarm as the precursors of national decay and race suicide. It is to be feared that the unnatural and monstrous sentiment of late years so prevalent that it is excusable in a married pair to avoid parental responsibility may, sooner or later, bring upon our people the curse of an infinite God. It is the crime of our age and country. Motherhood is no longer the glory of wifehood. Dr. Reamy, a distinguished physician, says that from a very large verbal and written correspondence he is satisfied we are "fast becoming a nation of murderers."

To a large extent children are born to such parents only as the parents can not avoid the natural consequences of the conjugal relation. And even these helpless little visitors are often unwelcome. They have to win the affection of the murderous minds which sought by every device to prevent their entrance into life.

Infanticide is more common than homicide. The same spirit of murder which prompts to the one, in its consequences upon mental states, leads logically to the other. Children born to such parents, during the entire period of their prenatal life, draw their sustenance from iniquitous fountains. They liter-

ally feed on murderous thoughts, and no matter how ardently they may be loved and fondled after birth, the evil tendencies bred into them are not likely to be eradicated. What wonder, then, that murderers stalk abroad to-day, or that the tribe of Cain is frightfully on the increase? As ye sow, that shall ye also reap.

And not murder alone, but crimes of every hue are traceable, directly or indirectly, to these unclean and debasing fountains. By the laws of heredity each generation is saturated by the evil streams which flow from its predecessor. The despicable traits of character and shameful revelations in fashionable and criminal life are the consequences of perversion.

What is the meaning of the modern epidemic of suicide? Can anybody explain it? What mystery of evil is it that drives such multitudes to self-destruction? Is not life worth living? Never more so to those who have a normal, healthy, holy life to live. But to the debased and self-indulgent, to the diseased and crime-perverted, it becomes an unbearable burden.

Hark! A revolver shot! The suicide lies weltering in his own blood. See yonder victim clutching a knife and plunging it into his own jugular.

Look at this wretch swallowing poison, trying to drown the stings of conscience in swelling waves of physical agony. Or perhaps the cowardly mortal chooses a painless death. He goes down to the river brink in the silent hour of night. He looks down into the liquid depths, and thinks he descries the bosom of Mother Nature inviting him to repose. He hears the rippling of the passing waters, and interprets it as a spirit voice bidding him leave his tenement of polluted clay. He looks upward to the stars, and in their twinkling light he seems to behold the glimmer of a happier day. He glances around upon the earth, bids farewell to the scenes of his prostitution and sin, and then, closing his eyes, clenching his fists, setting his teeth, and nerving himself for the dreadful deed, he plunges into the tide. The waters close over him and he disappears. The chill arouses him to action. He tries to breathe. His lungs fill with the unnatural element, typical of the perversions which have filled his life. There is a struggle. His eyes open wide. A panorama of vivid recollections of folly and crime sweep before his quickened vision. Then unconsciousness steals over him, death ensues, and all is over. Erelong he is missed from his accustomed haunts. A search is made. The fact of suicide becomes apparent. The

friends and the newspapers express wonder. Why should he have taken his own life? No business complications, no social entanglements, no incurable disease can be named as the cause. It is all a mystery.

A mystery? Yes, perchance, a "mystery of iniquity" loading his conscience, hurling reason from her throne, and goading him to an untimely end. No wonder that Dr. H. C. Wood should affirm that wine and women—in other words, vice—are probably at the base of one-half or one-third of the insanity of the world, and even a greater proportion of the suicides.

But let me turn from the contemplation of these forbidding extremes. A normal, hallowed, pure, and happy life is possible to every man. God never designed that we should become the slaves of passion or the monopolists of lust. St. Paul inquires, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the

Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." He says again: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." In these and many other passages the sacred writers shadow forth the complete redemption of our natures from all that is perverted and degrading.

You ask me, Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Let me direct you to counsel better than mine. The Psalmist says, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." It was his prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." One greater than the Psalmist, the Physician that heals all diseases, diagnoses the case with divine accuracy, and prescribes the remedy. Hear Him: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evils come from within, and defile the man." The remedy, then, is to cleanse the fountain. Get the heart right, clean, pure, and the streams of speech and conduct which issue from it will be pure likewise.

Brothers of the Young Men's Christian Association, hear the conclusion of the whole matter. We

are born with a downward tendency. This is the common lot of all. The Psalmist says, "We are shapen in iniquity." One has no natural purity to boast of above another. But the Psalmist likewise says, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sin is covered." Forgiveness is through the merits of Him "who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity." Therefore says St. Paul, "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

There is one mystery older and mightier than the mystery of iniquity, and that is the mystery of Godliness. Thank God! This mystery of Godliness is efficacious to drive out, root up, and eradicate from every heart the mystery of secret sin, and transform the entire nature into a new creature in Christ Jesus.

It is marvelous what a transformation Godliness makes in a human being. It is mysterious how that which is spiritual can so impress and renovate that which is material; for it is certain that Godliness does reach, modify, and improve every faculty and power of the physical organism. The affections recoil from all debasing attractions, shake off the slime

of worldly alliances, and turn to more worthy objects. The judgment is convinced by other evidence and the will controlled by other considerations. The result is the deportment is changed as well as the character. The persons once avoided are now sought and highly prized, and the society once coveted is now shunned with abhorrence.

And this spiritual renewal leads to physical renewal. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." The saved man can not reverence God and abuse His habitation, any more than he can respect a neighbor and break the windows and batter down the doors of his neighbor's house.

An understanding enlightened by heavenly wisdom and a conscience quickened by divine grace lead to jealous care of the body to preserve it from waste and injury, and to develop and use it in the service of God. And the body responds to the requirements of the Gospel. The dust of the world is shaken off, the marks of dissipation disappear, and the redeemed man, clothed and in his right mind, becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

II.

THE WORLD'S PEERLESS REPEATER.

"The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things."—JAMES III, 5.

SOMETIMES small agencies are mightily destructive. One modern machine gun is more to be feared than ten thousand ancient catapults.

The tongue is a small organ, but a tremendous power. Though boneless itself, it is a terrific bone-breaker. The whole world has by proverb acknowledged its destructiveness.

"The boneless tongue, so small and weak,
Can crush and kill," declared the Greek.

"The tongue destroys a greater horde,"
The Turk asserts, "than does the sword."

The Persian proverb wisely saith,
"A lengthy tongue—an early death."

Or sometimes takes this form instead,
"Do n't let your tongue cut off your head."

"The tongue can speak a word whose speed,"
Says the Chinese, "outstrips the steed."

While Arab sages this impart,
"The tongue's great storehouse is the heart."

From Hebrew wit the maxim sprung,
"Though feet should slip, ne'er let the tongue."

The sacred writer crowns the whole,
"Who keeps his tongue doth keep his soul."
—REV. PHILIP BURROUGHS STRONG.

The pen is mightier than the sword, but the tongue is mightier than the pen. It is heavier, sharper, swifter, swings easier, and never rusts or breaks. It is the worst kind of a weapon. It is a side-arm, shoulder-piece, and field ordnance, all in one. It is a bayonet to stab with, a rifle to shoot with, and a shell to cause explosions. It is a breech-loader, an endless repeater, and never hangs fire. It is furnished with telescope sights, a hair-trigger, and shoots only pointed bullets that always carry up. By much use it becomes quick in action and powerful in recoil. In battle, cannon sometimes become so hot as to be self-firing. The gunner has only to take off his thumb from the touch-hole and let in the air to produce the discharge. Occasionally such pieces go off before the men are ready, and kill everybody around them. Some tongues are just so. St. James says: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that

it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Hell-fire is like Greek fire: you can not put it out. It burns deep and strong, and continues forever. It can neither be confined nor checked in its terrific ravages. So with the fire of the tongue. "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." The iniquitous words of an unruly tongue are perpetual irritants. They sting the moment they enter the ear, and continue to rankle and fester after they have settled in the heart. They are the common origin of the most deadly of all heart diseases—malice. The apostle, referring to slanderous speech, says: "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Evil speaking is fiendish, "devilish." The fiend is yet incarnate, and therefore his diatribes are "sensual." They ring in the air of earth and echo in the smoke of hell. Nothing comes so near creating a jubilee in the pit of perdition as slander. Satan grins when the talebearer whispers. He fondly anticipates

the earthly confusion which backbiting creates and the hellish furore which it ultimately insures. God says: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off." He severs the slanderer from earth that he may go to his own place, and that place is not heaven. The home of God's elect has no room for such a disembodied spirit. "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and *whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*" The maker of a lie loveth Satan, "the father of lies," and at death is hugged to the Satanic bosom. It is some consolation to the good to know that in such cases Satan has an unyielding grip. He never lets go the spirit of the slanderer. A body thus defiled and a nature thus inflamed is too valuable an acquisition to hell's domains to be allowed to escape. It is indubitably certain that for the pitiless talebearer there is no second probation. The fiat of the Almighty ever rings in his hopeless soul, "Thou shalt not go up to be a talebearer among my people."

When any one in conversation with Peter the Great said anything against a third party, he would stop the speaker and say: "Hold on! Has this person no bright side? Tell me what excellencies you have noticed. It is very easy to splash mud, but I

would rather help a man to keep his coat clean." Would that we had a Peter the Great at every corner to check people in thoughtless and reckless speech!

The disposition to tattle is not always a natural propensity, and if it were it would only prove the fact of a fallen nature which needs correction. Malignant motives are generally at the bottom of hurtful gossip. A black heart serves as the fountain of the sin-stained lips. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." The heart of the talebearer is wrong. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. "These are the things which defile a man." The society of such a person is unbearable. "In his company," says the venerated Jay, "we are in a perfect inquisition; we are tortured with questions concerning everybody and everything. It would be well for him to remember that he is accountable not only for his time, but his tongue." The apostle Peter was careful to warn Christians that every one is to guard his speech so as not to "suffer as a busybody in other men's matters."

What right has any person to assume the task of

disseminating ugly gossip? What right has any human being to subject others to the inquisitorial rack, extorting from them all they know, often by indirection and artifice, of that which they would fain keep from the public ear, and then publishing it from the housetops? What *right,* did we say? Rather, who can have patience to endure such a *wrong?* How mean and contemptible the occupation of such a creature! How society should frown upon him (or her), make certain his condemnation, and secure for him the sentence of a worse than Siberian banishment—eternal isolation from the friendship or favor of every peace-loving nature!

"A lie will travel a league while truth is pulling on its boots." The rose has been faded from many a blooming cheek by the blight of a whispered insinuation.

"A whisper woke the air—
  A soft light tone and low,
  Yet barb'd with shame and woe,
Now might it only perish there
  Nor farther go.

Ah me! a quick and eager ear
  Caught up the little meaning sound!
Another voice hath breath'd it clear,
  And so it wanders round—
From ear to lip, from lip to ear—
  Until it reach'd a gentle heart,
And *that,* it broke."

It is because backbiting is so deadly in its effects that the busybody is a terror everywhere. "High life," as well as humble life, looks with scorn upon such a person. It is said that at a great Presidential reception in Washington a certain woman was recognized by the observers as "the most beautiful woman in the room." One remarked that "she must be a leader in society, as she had beauty, high position, great wealth, and more wit than many women can claim."

"That is true," was the response, "but nevertheless she is probably the most unpopular woman in Washington."

"Why so?"

"She is a busybody. People are charmed with her the first time they meet her; they are alarmed the second; and the third time they fly from her as if she had the plague."

It is characteristic of great talkers that they take a hint for everybody but themselves. A notorious scandal-monger once listened to a sermon on backbiting intended for herself, and straightway applied it to an acquaintance addicted only to mild tattling.

Women are usually not as bad talkers as men. They gossip more, but they slander less. In every community there is one man who in a single week

utters five times as many mean things about his neighbors as a whole regiment of men ought to utter in a lifetime.

Somewhere I have read of a Tongue Guard Society, the members of which pledge themselves to give one penny to its treasury every time they speak disparagingly of another person. The money thus raised is used for the benefit of the poor. People who form branches among themselves select their own beneficiaries, whom they charitably assist by the money accumulated. This novel source of revenue is a species of atonement to counterbalance the almost universal failing of speaking spitefully against persons. The following laws govern this society:

CONSTITUTION OF THE TONGUE GUARD SOCIETY.

Motto:

"'If aught good thou canst not say
Of thy brother, foe, or friend,
Take thou then the silent way,
Lest in word thou shouldst offend.'

"Article I. The name of this association shall be the Tongue Guard Society.

"Article II. Any person may become a member

of this society by signing the constitution and conforming to its rules.

"Article III. We, the undersigned, pledge ourselves to endeavor to speak no evil of any one.

"Article IV. Should we, however, through carelessness break our pledge, we agree for each and every offense to forfeit the sum of one cent. The money so forfeited to be placed in a box reserved for this purpose, and to be expended semi-annually for charitable objects.

"Article V. We also agree to use our best endeavors to increase the membership of the society in our town, and to assist in organizing societies in other places.

"Article VI. It is, however, understood that when called upon to give our opinion of the character of another it shall be done in truth, remembering in what we say the Scripture injunction, 'Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you.'"

Whether organized or not, all persons should subscribe to the foregoing rules. No human being is justified in saying mean things unless it be about mean facts, and then only to remedy them.

But the world's rapid-fire gun, the tongue, does

not content itself with firing a thousand lies a minute; it also indulges in profanity and blasphemy. What vice is more gratuitous and absurd than profane swearing? Phrenologists profess to find the location upon the human skull of all the animal propensities, but not one of them can discover the bump of profanity. It is not situated in the region of the brain; there is no sense in it. Practically the swearer is as destitute of reason as an idiot. A thief steals to augment his unlawful possessions, a glutton eats to gratify his depraved appetite, but what does a man swear for? He himself can not tell. He knows it is useless, and wicked, too. Every time he utters an oath he is conscious of his depravity and silliness, but he keeps at it. He swears at his fellows, at his team, at his dog, at an insect if it crosses his path, at a stumbling-block if it comes in his way. He anathematizes the weather, the heat, the cold, the rain, the snow, the wind and light. He curses himself for his folly, and others for their wisdom. He is loud-voiced betimes, and his bellowing blasphemies are the horror of his neighbors and the terror of children.

"His eye is fierce, his oaths are loud;
He rules and scoffs the crowd."

But he is a coward. The man who is conscious of reserve force equal to any emergency, intellectual, physical, or social, does not give way to swearing. He is quiet, not easily provoked, nor quick to retaliate. The swearer, on the contrary, is superficial, impulsive, shallow-brained, and callous-hearted. In army life, where men are free from social restraints, there is much swearing. There is more in the cavalry than in the infantry. Men who choose cavalry service have the characteristic impulsiveness and dash which prompt to unhallowed speech. Cool, calculating men, like General Grant, can express themselves mightily without an oath. They put themselves, not their hot blood and ill temper, into their words. When they speak, others listen; when they command, others obey. They utter the watchwords and maxims which become immortal, while the irreverent speeches of smaller men are forgotten with their deeds. Wickedness never made anybody great, and swearing is wickedness pure and simple. But for the third commandment, which prohibits it, men would scout it as a token of imbecility. Because it is a violation of God's law and a species of impiety, showing malignancy of spirit in the perpetrator, a sort of sign that he has not yet learned the language of Canaan, the iniquitous classes tolerate it.

Many men who have formed the habit would break away from it, because of its foolishness, if they could. Religion would cure them, but they do not want religion. They are simply persuaded that profane language is utterly useless, and would cease from it for their own improvement. Chrysostom suggested a good remedy for such. "Every time," said he, "that thou shalt find thyself to have let slip an oath, punish thyself for it by missing the next meal." Anybody can do that; and if a swearer is really sincere in his desire to reform he will not need to go hungry many days to purge himself of this evil. If Chrysostom's rule will not work with you, my swearing friend, try this: Every time you give vent to an oath, pay one dollar to the missionary cause.

A tongue bombardment kindred with swearing is that of impure speech. The world is full of bad talkers. Some are bad talkers because they are bad thinkers. They talk what they brood over and enjoy. Others talk bad from habit. They have always used more or less impure language, and they seem to think it would be an indication of weakness to break off. Others talk bad just to make an impression, to create a laugh, or startle somebody. They have a stock of hard words, rough wit, or vile jokes,

which they perpetrate at every opportunity, and derive much encouragement from their foolish efforts if they elicit a laugh or make a sensation. Should any hearer demur to the outrage, the fellow has friends who will say, "O, he meant no harm; it is his way; he is given to outlandish speech sometimes, but he is good-hearted." Thus social offenders are often excused when they ought to be arrested as moral assassins, tried at the bar of righteous sentiment, and condemned to banishment from pure society forever.

The apostle Paul taught the Ephesian brethren that they should be so separated from all unclean and inordinate practices as to abhor the very mention of them; and he further cautioned them against all scurrilous and obscene conversation, however suggested, all filthy speech and foolish jesting, as inconsistent with the Christian character. It was not his idea that religious thought and talk should always be somber and sedate, but he would have all innocent and agreeable mirth expressed in graceful and becoming discourse. This is sensible. It meets the approval of all pure-minded people as perfectly befitting the Christian life and name.

Conversation is calculated for our comfort and benefit. As our lives flow on we should gain knowl-

edge and experience, the expression of which will prove edifying and agreeable, instructive and promotive of virtue. In innocently entertaining each other with diverting narrations it is certainly only proper that we should avoid corrupt and corrupting thoughts, facts and figures, and seek to make each other wiser as well as happier, purer as well as more joyful. No one can calculate the mischiefs which follow the abuse of conversational privileges. Naturally our minds are open and susceptible to suggestions which tend to make us worse. Evil thoughts are conveyed without effort, but good ideas have to work against natural depravity and perhaps deep-rooted prejudice. Observation daily shows how much easier it is to debauch a good man and unsettle all his right principles, than to reform a bad one and clear him of notions thoroughly corrupt. The former may be accomplished by idle sports and pleasures, but the latter is business, and requires hard application. It is an old remark that "the sallies of a smart but undisciplined wit serve to laugh men out of their sobriety and religion; nay, even an uncommon expression that makes up in confidence and surprise what it wants in wit, is often able to expose the best and most sacred and to recommend the worst and vilest things, to wound a

neighbor's reputation mortally, or to diminish the reverence due to God." Sallies of low wit are dangerous, especially upon such as have not that conscious inward purity and power which turns from them in horror and disgust. To the mind that welcomes or even tolerates them they stick like fresh pitch, and are not cleared off by small effort. Imitation follows the liking of them, and growing corruption too often follows the imitation.

But there is a specious method of conveying corrupt ideas without using words in the slightest degree unchaste or offensive. The matter and purpose are obscene, while the manner of speech is entirely unobjectionable. This habit may be far more hurtful in its effects than filthy speech. The more artful the disguise the more dangerous the poison. Lasciviousness is thus insinuated with more confidence and security. It engages the fancy by being dressed up in cleaner robes, and throws the soul off its guard by avoiding forms of presentation that might give offense.

Vice has many forms, and so has the expression of it. Vicious minds can unfold their debasing spirit and purposes in cunning ways. Those who would keep themselves pure must be on their guard to resist the "first abhorred approach of ill," and keep

their natures so sensitive to evil designs as "the slightest touch of sin to feel." Herein lies their safety.

Another reprehensible lingual discharge is that of falsifying. David said, in his haste, all men are liars. Thank God that in his haste he said it, else he himself had lied. All men are not liars. There are men who would sooner their tongues should cleave to the roofs of their mouths than to utter a deliberate falsehood.

Yet lying is very common. It was so in days of old. Jeremiah sighed for a lodging place in the wilderness that he might escape the tongues of treacherous men. "They bend their tongues like their bow for lies," he cried; "they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; they proceed from evil to evil; every neighbor will walk with slanders; they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity."

Lying leads to other iniquities. Paul speaks of those who depart from the faith as speaking lies in hypocrisy. The liar is a hypocrite. He is a false pretender to virtue or piety. Like the hypocrite, his hope shall perish. The Psalmist says that "he that speaketh lies shall perish." The Revelator declares that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which

burneth with fire." They deserve it. They are unfit for heaven. They are unfit for good society on earth. "The Lord hates a liar." So do you. Everybody does. Liars hate each other. Solomon affirmed that "a lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it." This is the only redeeming quality in a liar; he has sense enough to despise others like himself.

Liars will steal. Under the Mosaic economy lying was prohibited in the same category with dealing falsely and with stealing.

Liars can not be trusted in any respect. They will perjure themselves for the love of it. "A faithful witness will not lie; but a false witness will utter lies."

"No lie is of the truth."

No lie is of the light.

No lie is of the pure.

No lie is abiding.

"The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." "The lip of truth shall be established forever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment."

Next to lying is *blowing*. Blowhards are the pests of society.

There is the political blowhard. He always has the best of the argument because he can bellow the loudest and hold out the longest. His party is

THE party, his man is THE man, and all others are shams and frauds.

There is the commercial blowhard. Perhaps he is a real-estate speculator, a patent-right man, or a shoddy auctioneer. No matter what. He can talk you deaf. He can talk you poor. He can drive you insane.

And there is the doctrinal blowhard. He has an ism. He is a stickler for tenets. He is generally a literalist. The letter killeth, so does he. He can argue you to death. He can bury you under his voluble harangues beyond the hope of a verbal resurrection.

Next to blowing is *grumbling*. A grumbler is the quintessence of acidity, the concentration of all that is disagreable. It is an iniquity for him to live,—I mean the constitutional, habitual, abandoned grumbler. Such a fellow becomes unfit to live, because he makes the lives of others a burden. In the ministry, grumblers are the fellows who are always at the wrong appointment. In the pews they are never satisfied with the pastor and the plans of the Church. At boarding-schools they are always hungry for beef when pork is served; and for pork when beef is served. At home they are dissatisfied because they are at home; and away from home they

are home-sick because they are away. The things that are not and can not be are the only things that would please them. They are the torment of their kindred, the nuisances of society, the terror of the Church, and the humbugs of the world.

Why can we not all thank the Lord that it is as well with us as it is, improve whatever is our lot with smiles and sunshine, and go forward in the strength of Him who has favored us with such blessings as only our base ingratitude leads us to despise?

"Let us gather up the sunbeam
Laying all along our path;
Let us keep the wheat and roses,
Casting out the thorns and chaff;
Let us find our sweetest comforts
In the blessings of to-day,
With a patient hand removing
All the briers from the way."

Next to grumbling is *scolding*. This may be necessary sometimes, but rarely so. The scolding habit is certainly harmful.

"Speak gently; it were better far
To rule by love than fear.
Speak gently; let not harsh words mar
The good you might do here."

"A soft answer turneth away wrath." If frowning speech were changed to smiling counsels, earth's

gloom would be dissipated and heaven's sunshine would pour in. Substitute sweetness of speech for useless scolding, and many a darkened home would be radiant with joy. If we all realized that we are speaking, as in a telephone, into the ear of God, we would be more careful to "season our conversation as with salt."

There are other sins of the tongue, such as false teaching and uncharitable judgments. Beware! Never teach an untruth. Never give an unimportant truth the place of an essential truth. Be charitable. Judge not. Weigh motives.

"Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!"

Man is responsible for every word he speaks. God has given us two eyes to see with, two ears to hear with, a big brain to think with, but only a little tongue to talk with. Learn to hold that tongue. Always guard it. Never use it except in innocent and worthy service.

III.

THE TRUTH THAT CONQUERS.

"He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs."—Acts 1, 3.

The truth of the resurrection of Jesus is the corner-stone of the Christian system. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Happily we are not left without satisfactory evidence. Jesus lived on this earth. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He rose again from the dead, and compelled the belief of it by "many infallible proofs."

The existence of Jesus Christ on earth is conceded by skeptics.

John Stuart Mill, while denying the Divinity of Jesus, grants the originality of His life and character as proof of their historical truth. "Who among the disciples of Jesus," inquires he, "or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and char-

acter revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, and as certainly not St. Paul."

M. Rénan, the accomplished French skeptic, while holding to the legendary theory as to many facts in Christ's life, allows the authenticity of St. Matthew's Gospel, grants that Matthew was an eye-witness and an ear-witness of what he records, or at least had direct means of knowing the truth of it. He makes these concessions on the internal credibility of the narrative, and on the authority of Papias, who wrote early in the second century, and of a chain of succeeding writers, who quote from the Gospel, or refer to it. Of the 971 verses in Matthew's Gospel, Rénan refers to 791 of them as giving an accurate account of the sayings or doings of our Lord.

The groundwork of the Gospel story is well established by numerous secular writers of early date. Mara the Syrian, in writing to his son Serapion, A. D. 74, says: "For what benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death, or the Jews by the murder of their wise King? Socrates did not die because of Plato, nor yet the wise King because of the new laws which He enacted."

Tacitus, the Roman historian, born A. D. 55, in speaking of the Christians whom Nero had slaugh-

tered, says: "The author of that name was Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal, under the procurator Pontius Pilate." Speaking of the foregoing testimony, the historian Gibbon says that "the most skeptical criticism is obliged to respect its truth."

So voluminous is the profane testimony to the fact of Christ's life and death that, had the New Testament never been written, these facts would remain clearly established. It is evident that Jesus walked this earth in the form and fashion of a man, and that at about the age of thirty-three He was put to death.

Did Jesus rise again from the dead?

It is plain that if nothing extraordinary occurred subsequently to the death of Jesus, the religion He established would speedily have come to an end. No one else appeared on the scene to take up His work where He laid it down. The disciples themselves centered all their hope in the idea that Jesus "was He who should have redeemed Israel." They would have followed no other leader had a capable one appeared. And they would never have preached Christianity had Jesus remained dead. Something wonderful happened or the movement would have perished. What was that "something?" No small

occurrence would have sufficed. No uncertain announcement would have stood the rigorous test. The predictions respecting Jesus were universally known, and had excited bitter enmity among unbelievers. Any attempt at imposition, any trick or fraud or lie on the part of the disciples, would have resulted in the death of the disciples and in the extinction of Christianity.

What, then, kept the movement alive? History ascribes its life to the belief that Jesus had risen from the dead. Whether a fact or a delusion, it is evident that this belief instantly sprang up, and that it held together, as by magnetic attraction, the original community which Jesus had founded.

Glance at the circumstances. The body of Jesus was missed from the sepulcher, and the fact created a natural sensation. What became of that body? The disciples did not steal it, for Roman soldiers had it in charge. They had no motive to steal it, for they could neither conceal it nor make any use of it. The authorities did not do away with it, for it was to their interest to keep it secure in the tomb. The soldiers did not disturb it, for they were in the pay of a prejudiced government and under blood penalties. What became of that body? There is no theory which meets all the demands of the situation

save the truthful one that Jesus rose again from the dead. "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." This power He exercised. He returned to the lifeless clay, arose in full vigor, laid aside the grave clothes, rolled back the stone from the door, and stepped out.

The soldiers beheld Him, and were frightened nearly to death. Before they could rally themselves sufficiently to give an alarm Jesus was beyond their reach. The risen Christ then revivified the seemingly lost cause. No other event could have given to Christianity its instant power and imperishable vitality.

Modern skeptics concede that the disciples were sincere in their belief that they had seen their Master alive after His crucifixion. Rénan admits that without this belief they would not have incurred the labors, perils, and sufferings incident to the founding of the Christian Church. Strauss affirms that without faith in the resurrection no Christian community could have been formed. "There can be no doubt," he says, "that the apostle Paul had heard from Peter, James, and others that Jesus had appeared to them, and that all these persons and the five hundred brethren were fully convinced that they had seen Jesus living, who had been dead." Baur

also says that "history must hold fast to this fact that, for the faith of the disciples, the resurrection of Jesus was a certain and immovable truth, and that it is only in this faith that Christianity found a solid basis for its whole historical development."

There is another fact which renders any subsequent error or deception an impossibility. The account of Christ's resurrection was published and circulated while many of the witnesses to it were yet alive. No one denied these reports. The evidence was such that neither Jew nor pagan dared to call it in question.

More than this, the published truth took hold of the world. The Churches became as powerful as an unquestionable miracle could make them. Thousands of sinners were saved, and the cause extended from Jerusalem into other cities and into other lands.

Among the distinguished converts to Christianity was Saul of Tarsus, and the proofs of the resurrection which he has given to the world are irrefutable.

All the eminent unbelievers of modern Europe allow that the Pauline Epistles to the Galatians, Romans, and Corinthians are the apostle's own writings, and these documents carry us back to within twenty-eight years of the crucifixion. Paul had been a Christian preacher twenty years when he

penned these Epistles, and his historical recollections must have covered a space of twenty years prior to that time, so that his declarations have a basis in conversations with multitudes who had seen Christ and had listened to His teachings. In Paul's Epistles, therefore, we have a contemporaneous record of infinite value. And those Epistles teach us that their accomplished author had been a sworn opponent of the Christian faith, and was won over to it only by evidence he simply could not withstand. It was the truth of the resurrection that conquered him, and it was this truth which he made the paramount theme of his Epistles. "We are found false witnesses of God," cried this redeemed persecutor, "if Christ be not risen." "We also believe," he cried again, "and therefore we speak, knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus." To him the doctrine of the resurrection was as sure a thing as the fact of his own existence.

Peter and James also give manifold testimony to the truth of the resurrection. All the early Christians entered into the faith, and many of them who became authors left testimonies which coincide with those of the canonical Gospels, and constitute a solid parallel foundation for the faith of the Christian world. Clement, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and many

more, all declare in language unmistakable that the same Jesus who had died rose again, and, after giving infallible proofs of His identity, founded His Church anew, and then ascended into heaven. References to New Testament teachings are so abundant in the writings of the fathers that quite an accurate life of Jesus could be put together from this source alone.

Even the early adversaries of Christianity indirectly confirm the truth which they attacked. Doddridge says that "an abridgment of the history of Christ may be found in Celsus," one of the Epicurean philosophers, who made the first written attack upon Christian teaching, about A. D. 180, and whose work was fully answered by the Greek father, Origen, about seventy years later. No doubt the same would be true of the writings of Porphyry had they not perished, as the quotations from them in the Christian fathers abundantly show. So futile and absurd were all the formidable early attacks on the authenticity of the Scriptures and the validity of Christian doctrine that after the conversion of Constantine, A. D. 312, these attacks practically ceased, and opposition to Gospel truth became rare and feeble until the English Deists of the seventeenth century arose, followed by the infidels of the eighteenth century,

and the rationalists and philosophical skeptics of the nineteenth. And despite all these later enemies, the credentials of Christianity still live, and Christian truth itself is a conquering power in the world.

"He shewed Himself alive." He is alive to-day, spiritually and gloriously alive. His cause is alive. His worship is alive. There has not been a break in His adoration and service for nearly two thousand years. He is leading His people on. He is inspiring them to conquest. He will overcome His foes. He will save mankind. He will conquer the nations. He will rule in love. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He hath set judgment in the earth." Jesus appears to each of us. Our eyes see Him not. Our ears hear Him not. We can not put our fingers in the print of the nails. But our hearts feel His presence, and beat in loving sympathy with His.

IV.

A NUT FOR DESPISERS TO CRACK.

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you."—Acts xiii, 38-41.

When St. Paul uttered these words, he had for ten years been a Christian, and for twelve years had considered the evidence supporting the truth of Christ's resurrection.

He is now at Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians, and, in a sermon of wonderful power, is proclaiming Jesus as the Savior of men, as demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead. "Through this Man," he says, forgiveness of sin is

being realized by all that believe, and the wonder work of the ages is being wrought through Him. He affirms that some will despise these things, even while they are unable to account for them, and will perish in their very presence because of unbelief. He intimates that no amount of evidence is sufficient to save a certain class of people from the doom of disbelief.

"Though a man declare it unto you." That word "declare" is from the Latin *clarus*, clear, bright, free from obscurity, and is used in the same sense as when the Psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God," they furnish their own evidence, embody it in their brightness, and flame it forth in unconcealable splendor.

These moral miracles of a gospel preached in all the world through Christ, and the manifest result of believers justified and saved, may be "declared" with all the logic and eloquence and vehemence of which a trained scholar, like Paul, is capable, and yet some will despise them as the Jews did the other miracles of Christ, and close their eyes to all current events which prove the presence of God among men.

To a mind enlightened by the Spirit, the deliverance of a soul from the sense of guilt is as contrary to the laws of nature, and to any human experience

anterior to Jesus, as if, at the word of God, a mountain should rise out of a plain or an island from the depth of the sea. And yet this deliverance is occurring every day, and has been for nineteen hundred years. No one dreamed of preaching such a doctrine until God revealed it and Jesus sealed it by His death. Since it began to be preached, millions have tested it and found it so true that they have likewise sealed it by their death. This doctrine so unique in the world could never have been successfully introduced by any event less momentous and convincing than the appearance of God among men.

St. Augustine says that there are three things in history which seem incredible, and, if judged by human standards, are incredible and impossible, viz.: That Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven; that the world should have believed so incredible a thing; and that this universal belief should have been brought about by the preaching of a few illiterate and uninfluential fishermen. Yet these three things are established in human faith and in earthly fact. If this result has been achieved through the persuasive power of a real resurrection, then it is a Divine work. If achieved without that power, then it is incumbent upon the despisers to account for it, which as yet they have sadly failed to do.

This bright, well-educated, and richly-experienced Cilician says that forgiveness of sins is through faith in a risen Christ. Does he lie? Is he deceived? Should he be despised? Or ought the despisers themselves to be despised? It is a question of fact as well as faith. Forgiveness of sin is now being preached. Believers are now testifying that through this doctrine they are being justified. Shall we accept their testimony, or shall we scoff at it?

Perhaps it will help us to go back of their testimony, back of their faith, back of the preaching of forgiveness, and back of the story of the resurrection.

I will ask, Is Jesus Himself a real personage? Did "this Man" live and labor among men? Is the Christ of Christianity a verity, or is He a myth?

This is the fundamental question. Sometimes people ask: Was water ever turned into wine? Was Lazarus raised from the dead? Was the Red Sea ever divided? Did the whale swallow Jonah? Did iron ever swim? But these are not primary questions. The primary question is, Can we depend upon the Christ of history and of current belief as an actual personage? This question settled, all the others take care of themselves.

There is not one miracle recorded in the New

Testament which does not point back to Christ. There is not one recorded in the Old Testament which does not point forward to Him. He is the central factor in all miracles. He is greater than any miracle. He is greater even than the miracle of His own resurrection. Therefore, given an actual Christ such as the world knows, and belief in the supernatural and in the spiritual becomes as easy as breathing itself. Hence the overcredulous man is not he who believes that Jesus saves, but he who concedes Christ to be a verity, and yet denies that He is a Savior.

If Christ is a verity, He is a miracle. God manifest in the flesh is a greater miracle than water turned into wine or a human spirit returned to its house of clay.

Thus it happens that a miracle which, standing by itself alone, seems incredible, becomes perfectly believable when connected with Christ. As Principal Cairns so aptly says, "If the Son of God be really in the field, it is not strange that higher than mortal weapons should gather around Him." It is at this point that many intelligent skeptics have been rescued from the peril of their position.

The late Dr. Edwards A. Park in his young manhood became very skeptical as to the truth of Bible

miracles. He could not gainsay the evidence of their truth, nor yet accept them as verities. "I remained," he says, "for a long time in painful suspense. But when I reflected on the vicarious atonement made by our Lord, I was so impressed by its grandeur that miracles in favor of it appeared to be reasonable. There seemed to be a propriety that He should rise from the grave. Indeed, there seemed to be an impropriety that He should not rise. His atonement is so noble, and speaks so directly to the heart, and is so benign in its influence on man, that it removes the antecedent improbability against the miracle of His resurrection. It creates a probability in favor of that miracle. It justifies our implicit faith in the testimony which favors it. We fully believe that Christ rose from the dead. Now, this is the most stupendous miracle recorded in the Bible. If we believe the greater, we can easily believe the smaller." And this greater miracle is supported, not only by the vast array of evidence which accompanied it, but by living, growing evidence as infallible as any which ever supported an earthly truth.

There are four hundred millions of people in the world to-day who, by language and conduct, declare their belief in the resurrection of Christ and in the

actuality of forgiveness through Him. They do it by keeping His Sabbath, by engaging in His worship, and by the word of testimony. They are not all experienced Christians, but those of them that are experienced are, as a result, the more confident, firm, and restful. Now, this state of restfulness is evidence of a satisfied mind. President Porter never stated a more emphatic truth than when he said, "The heart can neither love nor trust what the head demonstrates to be untrue." The love and trust reposed in Christ prove that His redemption stands the test of scrutiny and the fondest anticipations of faith.

Even those who have not by personal experience proved Christianity to be a transforming power in their own lives, have, by observing its superior force as a saving element in human society, been constrained to acknowledge its marvelous character and its benign influence among men. Thus the late Hon. John J. Ingalls, whom no one ever charged with excessive religious zeal, in an article widely published, stated that, though other religions are older than Christianity, "none have exerted such an immense influence upon government, society, and civilization." Of Jesus he said that "millions to-day would rather die than surrender their faith in Him."

What? "Rather die?" All that a man hath will

he give for his life, but all that a man is by faith in Christ will he cling to and defend though it cost him his life.

Thousands of native Christians in China, and hundreds of thousands in Armenia, all resolutely dying rather than to surrender their faith in Christ, are the incontestable proofs of our generation that the Kansas statesman told the truth.

But there are witnesses all around us. By faith they have come into an experience as real to them as consciousness, and far more precious than life. There are persons before me who would die for Christ.

Now, such an experience is more wonderful than a physical miracle. Just think of the power to say in truth: "I was dead, and I live; I was blind, and I see; I was a slave, and I am free; I was an enemy of God, and I love Him; the Bible, prayer, and Christian society were once repugnant to my taste, while now they are the source of my highest joy. Behold a miracle! And if God is able to work that one, there are none of which He is not capable."

You may tell me there are hypocrites in the world, men who are given to telling lies concerning their experience. It matters not. If, since Jesus died, there has been one genuine Christian among

all the professors of religion, one soul actually redeemed by Christ's blood, it follows that, in spite of hypocrites, the supernatural has occurred, that God does work special changes in the souls of men.

Despise this truth as you may; reject it if you will; nevertheless you can not evade the force of the fact that one saved soul proves God to be immanent in the lives of men, and that through Christian processes He is in our day working a work as marvelous as any in history. And the fact of this one saved soul is a sort of truth which demonstrates itself. Steam is a power that can be tested, and so is electricity. Christ is also a power just as unmistakably manifest in human life. Indeed, steam and electricity have not caused as great changes in material life and in methods of business as Christianity has caused in moral life and in modes of worship. Wherever this religion has gone, the miracle of an awakened people has followed. Wherever it has not gone, society has remained stagnant. Christian progress is, therefore, the proof of Christ as a living and uplifting power.

Here, then, are stubborn facts, not theories, confronting the despisers.

1. Christianity is here. It is established. It is at work. It is the greatest power on earth. It is

the most purifying and at the same time the most energizing influence the world has ever known. Its history can not be eradicated nor its power destroyed.

2. Christianity came here somewhow. The Gospels were written by somebody. The Christ-life was either lived or invented. If lived, it is divine. If not lived, the invention is more incredible than a miracle.

3. Ordinary reason discerns that Christianity must have had its origin in supernatural sources.

(a) Bad men would not have invented a system which condemns themselves.

(b) Good men would not tell lies about the origin of any system, ascribing their own work to God.

(c) All men concede that the fruits of Christianity are more benign and uplifting than those of other religions. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

But there are those who fancy that Christianity is waning, and that ultimately its power will pass away. Poor souls! Do they not see that Christian civilization is sweeping forward as never before? Christian nations are ruling the world. Christian power is penetrating Asia, stirring Japan, controlling Africa, and attracting attention everywhere. Chris-

tian light is shining through the darkness of unbelief in all lands, and giving more comfort to dying men than all other religions combined.

Say what you will, it is Christian faith that blesses the world. "The great motive forces of earth are its Christian beliefs." These have removed mountains of difficulty from the path of progress, and crowned the work of man with the blessings of God. Every great achievement since Noah built the ark has been the fruit of faith, and not of unbelief.

And what the world most needs to-day is a more ardent championship of this truth. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." A witness is the most important person in any court. You can dispense with a lawyer, a judge, or a jury, but you can not dispense with witnesses. Evidence counts. Paul said that Jesus had made him "a minister and a witness," and he never failed in his preaching to push his testimony to the front. It was "witnessing both to small and great" that made his ministry so effective.

There is force in religious testimony which is irresistible. God Himself seems to be in it. J. Hudson Taylor, of the China Inland Mission, tells of a native convert, a beautiful girl of her race, who

alone, in a community of the despisers of everything foreign, had accepted the truth and was called to meet her God. "Throw open the doors," said she. "Call the people in, that they may learn how a Christian can die." None of them had ever witnessed a Christian death scene, and they were amazed at her calm and beautiful departure. Her last exclamation, "Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming!" led to many conversions, her own relatives being among the number.

No one can measure the possible influence of a word for Christ. How noble it was in our own American Admiral Watson, when in Tokio a few years ago, that he should go with his staff direct from a reception by the Mikado to a special meeting of the Tokio Young Men's Christian Association, and there, after speaking long and eloquently to the three hundred young Japanese of the wonderful strides of their nation since his first visit, he should add: "I am an old man. I have had many pleasures. I have attained the highest place possible for me to attain in the navy of my country; but I wish to testify before you that it is my hope in Jesus Christ my Savior which I prize above all else, and which sustains me in all I do." His words produced

a profound impression, and may have had their influence on the heroic conduct of many a Japanese in their brave struggle with the Russians.

And let me give another instance of what a word fitly spoken may do. An obscure Highlander boy, whose parents had taught him to revere God, became a marine on board a British man-of-war. A battle rages. The deck is swept by a tremendous broadside from the enemy. The captain, James Haldane, a profane man, orders another company on deck to take the place of the dead. At sight of the mangled remains of their comrades, the marines became panic-stricken and ungovernable. The captain raves at them blasphemously, and wishes them all in hell. Up steps the pious Highlander, a man now full grown, and touching his hat, says, "Captain, I believe God hears prayer; if He hears yours, what will become of us?" When the battle was over, Captain Haldane reflected on the words of the brave marine, became interested in the claims of religion, surrendered his heart to God, became a preacher of the Gospel and pastor of a Church in Edinburgh. Through his instrumentality his brother, Robert Haldane, was brought to reflection, became a decided Christian, settled in Geneva, stirred up Protestantism

there, and became the means of leading a large number of theological students into the light, among the number being J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, author of the immortal History of the Reformation, and the father of Rev. Dr. D'Aubigne, whose recent visit to the United States served to create new interest in the evangelical religion of France. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" One spark from the luminous soul of that poor Highlander, well lodged in the heart of his unpretending boy, becomes the flame that enkindles a famous city and shines in historic splendor around the world.

No man loses anything worth retaining by reverencing God and making that reverence known.

The late Captain Philip, of the battle-ship *Texas,* was a brave commander, and never more brave than when in the battle with Cervera, amid the roar of cannon, he hushed the yells of his exultant seamen at sight of their own effective shooting by saying, "Don't cheer, boys; the poor devils are dying." And again, when the battle was over, and Spain's vaunted armada lay strewn in helpless hulks on Cuba's shore, he reverently lifted his hat, and, raising his eyes toward heaven, exclaimed, "I wish to acknowledge my faith in God the Father Almighty."

Happy the man who has a faith to acknowledge, and courage enough to make the acknowledgment when and where it will do some good.

He who fears to testify to the Divinity of the Christian religion betrays his incapacity to seize upon impressive facts and make them a part of his life force. He who is without the fact of a redeemed nature is destitute of the most energizing and refining experience that can come to mortals on this side the gate of Paradise.

V.

DEATH, LIFE, PEACE.

"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."—ROM. VIII, 6.

THE Bible is remarkable for the contrasts it presents. "What shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "He that saveth his life shall lose it." And here is the text presenting the striking results of carnality and those of spirituality.

I. What is it to be carnally minded? Two expressions, oft repeated in this chapter, answer the question: 1. To walk after the flesh; and, 2. To be under the law of sin.

To "walk after the flesh" does not always imply carnal acts, but it does imply a mental and moral condition in which bodily sensibilities and worldly actualities are chiefly sought and enjoyed. "They that are after the flesh do mind, or relish, the things of the flesh." Carnality and spirituality are opposites, so that they who are in the one condition can

not be in the other. "They that are in the flesh can not please God," but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The word "carnal" is never used to describe the children of God, and the word "spiritual" is never applied to the unregenerate. The spiritual man is not the carnal, even though there remain in him some traces of the carnal mind; nor is the carnal man the spiritual, even though there be in him some aspirations after holiness. The carnal mind has a general trend toward carnality, fleshliness, worldliness, and a general inaptitude or disrelish for spiritual things. The carnal mind in its best and wisest thoughts is enmity against God, because it is not subject to the law of God. It has made no surrender, has not been purged, renovated, spiritualized. It is in its fallen condition, corrupt and rebellious. The law is holy, but the carnal man is sold under sin.

II. Note some characteristics of a carnal mind.

1. Such a mind is the slave and drudge of the body in respect to material things. Like the Israelites in Egypt it is made perpetually to moil in clay. Merchandise, trades and manufactures, tillage and husbandry, are all employed for the gratification of the body, not as a means to a higher end. We know that the necessities of our bodies require much at-

tention, and that legitimate pleasures are allowed to us, but the carnal man makes these necessities and indulgences supreme. He forces his soul to forget itself and its proper business in this world, to attend to the inordinate cravings and lusts of the flesh after the perishable and temporal. He spends all his time and choicest pains upon earthly things, and engages his affections to them.

2. The carnal mind is under the sway of evil propensities. A carnal person, when provoked, will always consult with his lower nature. For an injury, real or imaginary, he seeks revenge. Ask him why, and he will tell you that "flesh and blood can not endure this wrong." Exactly so. He is in the carnal frame. Saul was in this condition when pursuing David, and so intense was his bitterness that he killed himself in the vain and mad pursuit, simply to end his own agony. Proud flesh and blood are the cause of revenge. The carnal mind will not yield. "By pride cometh contention and strife," whereas humility would keep peace.

Pliny tells of two ill-natured goats meeting upon a narrow bridge over a deep chasm. Neither could pass the other, and for a moment they began to fight. Perceiving their danger, however, one of them lay down and allowed the other to walk over him, and

both were saved. The example of these brute beasts teaches us that it is better to let persons trample upon us sometimes than, by squabbling and discord, to endanger the destruction of both ourselves and others. A man who is meditating revenge can not go to God and say as Christ hath taught him, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." If he uses this petition with his heart full of revenge, he does no more than to imprecate a curse upon himself. Such a man is carnal, sold under sin. The wise man teaches us that it is the glory of a man to pass by an injury, but the revengeful person has never learned this wisdom. A victory of that variety is to him inglorious defeat.

Some who are thus carnal can go so far as to say "I forgive;" but they usually add, "I can never forget." They are unlike the one who remarks in Cyprian that though he had an excellent memory for all things else, he could never remember an injury. These vengeful people can never forget an injury. They can forget a sermon or a kindness or an accommodation, but they can remember an injury or a slight for forty years. If God should forgive our sins, but not forget them, what would become of us? It is He that says, "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

3. The carnal mind consults with carnal natures in respect to Divine things. Many are captivated with the specious reasonings of skeptics, the literature which ignores salvation, and the sophistical arguments of rationalistic philosophy. Yet Paul warns against this tendency, "lest any man should beguile you with enticing words," and his practice was in accord with his teaching: "I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Carnal wisdom assumes various forms, sometimes rejecting the Gospel because of its simplicity, and again because of its mystery. The Jews rejected it because its doctrines opposed theirs, and the Greeks rejected it because it is so plain that a fool can understand it. Paul rose above them both, and said, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

4. The carnal mind studies its own inclinations in respect to duty. It has sense in the room of faith, and self in the place of God. It says, "Except I see

signs and wonders I will not believe." It demands as a condition of faith that one appear from the dead. It forgets that Moses, the prophets, and the apostles are a sufficient ground of confidence.

Such persons are the last to take upon themselves the yoke of Christ. They shrink from self-denial, and scoff at solemn warnings. Finding within themselves evil desires they would gratify, they hate the purity of the Gospel which forbids.

5. The carnal mind is often given over to deeds of hopeless wickedness. This is the extreme of carnality. It will violate any or every one of the commandments if it can do so and yet evade the penalty of human law. It dreads State prison or the whipping-post or the gallows far more than the pains of hell, simply because it is carnal, fleshly, worldly. Its spiritual apprehensions are stupefied. Conscience is hardened. The will is blind to the stern requirements of the moral law. Hence "to be carnally minded is DEATH."

III. Carnality is death,—

1. To right reason. God says, "Come now, let us reason together." The carnal mind will not respond. It refuses to consider. It prefers undisturbed self-sufficiency.

2. To pure pleasure. I do not say that the car-

nally minded have no pleasures. It were folly to do so. Yet their pleasures usually have the rust of decay or the taint of sin upon them, and the exulting joys of genuine religious experience are to them insipid, fanatical, or meaningless.

3. To high aspirations. The carnal mind gropes in the dust. Its thoughts run on a low plane. It has never been stirred by the consciousness of God, nor broadened by the obligations and privileges of spiritual attainments possible to it, nor comforted by the Christian's blessed hope.

What a strange creature man is! How wonderfully he is endowed! How little he knows of his real self! Who can picture the untold powers of happiness of which a human being is capable? Or of the depths of misery to which he may be plunged? Or the nobility of action and execution which are possible to a resolute soul?

Experience teaches us by suggestion rather than by realization. The tremendous possibilities of pain and anguish possible to us in the fullest flow of life are largely concealed quantities. "Some sudden pang of remorse; the slow anticipation of a cruel sorrow; the loss of an object dear to us; or the intense yearning of deep affection, frequently startles us with the dreadful conviction of *how* much we may

be made to suffer; and then comes the thirst for sympathy, and the fear that we shall not find it. The world knows nothing of our heart; the best friend may not understand its many windings; and even if we could trust him, our efforts to explain ourselves most frequently end in the simple declaration that words can not express what we mean. In short, as far as human sympathy goes, there must still be many a time when a man feels that he is utterly alone."

And this feeling of loneliness is especially characteristic of the carnal state. The practice of things forbidden and the abusive indulgence in things allowed bring condemnation. In natural sorrow and affliction a person can go to God and find comfort, but when under condemnation this comfort is cut off. The lonely, condemned, depressed carnal mind may whisper in some trusted ear an intimation of its woes, but the consolation it thus receives is not adequate to its requirements. The conviction that its sin is deliberate and willful, that its secret and useless wrongs have offended God, that the Divine source of relief is cut off to it, are crushing to peace and comfort, and discouraging to hope.

Such condemnation, often borne in loneliness and dread, is utterly fatal to those holy ambitions and

satisfying aspirations natural to an immortal spirit. It thwarts good resolutions and gives the lie to fair promises. The thought that we are not living up to the full measure of our privileges, nor meeting our clearest obligations, nor using our talents and endowments as we ought, is simply overwhelming to a conscience not utterly dead.

So also of those spiritual sins, such as pride, covetousness, unbelief, and all other emotions cherished in opposition to God. They condemn us. They press us to the earth. They hold us in the grip of strong condemnation.

Some one has said that "the minds of most men are little better than a vast and dusty lumber-room, into which days and hours have been flung aside as useless. Here lies a golden opportunity for a good or a great action, which at the time he trampled on; there, still glittering in one dark corner, are the bright talents that idleness or carelessness have left to rust. Now and then appears a warm and kind feeling, which, because religion was not at hand to guide and protect it, was flung away, and has turned to bitterness. These are warnings unheeded, blessings forgotten, and gifts neglected; making one great class of undying memories, over which the dark wings of remorse will one day brood to all

eternity." And if such negative delinquencies open the door to the phantom of eternal remorse, what about the cherished degradations and positive sins which distinguish the carnal mind? Surely they are the precursors of the death that never dies. "The wages of sin is death." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but die they must. The seeds of death sown in their hearts by their own misdoings and cultivated by their own evil ways, inevitably develop toward the final harvest of everlasting displeasure and pain. The carnal man is dead while he lives. He is a walking sepulcher, and perdition is the end of his journey.

IV. But over against this somber picture I rejoice to place a brighter view. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

The spiritually minded are those who mind the things of the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death. Through the Spirit they have mortified the deeds of the body, and they are enabled to live to Christ. They are led by the Spirit of God, and are the sons of God. They have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but they have received the Spirit of adoption whereby they cry,

Abba, Father. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." They may suffer with Jesus for a little time, but it is only that they may be glorified together with Him.

And those who are thus spiritual enjoy gracious advantages.

1. They are free. Men glory in freedom. They fight for it. They suffer and die for it. They prize it when obtained.

And here is freedom, the richest, sweetest, and most perfect freedom to mortals known.

> "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves beside."

He is free from the galling chains of lust. He counts every creature of God good, and uses it for his glory, but he abuses nothing. For him base passion has no bond, and inordinate greed no spur. He realizes that he is only a steward of the manifold mercies of God, and acts as one who must give an account. He is free from the feverish thirst for pleasure and the unseemly struggle for place. He

is the wise man who commands himself, and is commanded by no power short of God.

2. He is in touch with the Master. He has fellowship with the purest Being that ever lived on earth. He is assured of help from the highest source. He consults with God. He is in counsel with heaven. He rejoices in the consciousness that no man is blessed with environments superior to his own. He lives and moves and has his being in God.

3. His aims harmonize with the Divine. He is a co-worker with God. The ultimate end of all his toil is the glory of God. He feels himself allied with the most gracious power in the universe and identified with the noblest movement.

4. He is conscious of the new life. It stirs his energies. It fires his ambition. It gives him confidence for broad plans and severe undertakings. For him to live is Christ. So long as his feet touch the shores of earth he is filled, thrilled, comforted, and blest by the surging, upholding, controlling life within.

5. He has peace. He is justified by faith. The peace of God comforts him. Nothing worries him. He rests in the Everlasting Arms. Sin is gone. Pride is gone. He covets earnestly the best gifts,

and covets nothing else. He illustrates the Divine order, "first pure, then peaceable."

6. He has a foretaste of heavenly bliss. His life is hid with Christ in God. He has tasted of angels' food, and is ministered unto by messengers from the Throne. He has an anchor for his soul, and fears no storms. He has a prospect for his spirit, and dreads not death. His affections are normal in relation to kindred and friends, and they are also placed on things above, so that no earthly happening can whelm him in despair. He is "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." In due time those wings shall spread and bear him peacefully to eternity.

VI.

THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING.

"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."—Col. 1, 28.

The great purpose of preaching is to perfect Christian character.

"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints."

The faithful preacher warns every sinner and instructs every believer that each may be delivered from sin and fully established in grace. Sometimes we talk about ministers being called to preach, but the real call is to save men by preaching. Evangelism is the supreme business of the Christian life. There is no better preparation for heaven than so to live as to be rallying others to go through the pearly gates with us.

A test of the Church's vigor is its power to propagate itself. It must win friends from its foes, re-

generate their hearts, transform their lives, and set them to work to win others. A vigorous Church is a growing Church, a Church allied to God, consecrated to His truth, and united with Him in works of mercy and love.

By the Church we mean the ministers as well as members, and the members as well as ministers. There are no ranks or orders in grace. He that keeps himself pure and obeys God has the highest title known to Divinity. He is an heir to the Throne, and shall rule kingdoms. You remember that when Paul gave instruction to Timothy he told him to look out for his character first, and then to his beliefs. "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Ministers need to save themselves as well as to save others, and the minister who is himself abundantly saved is the one most likely to inspire other believers to seek an uttermost salvation.

The mission of Jesus Christ into this world is to save men. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save the people from their sins;" not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins.

"Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin."

Pilate examined Jesus closely, and said, "I find no fault in this man." His bitterest enemies were obliged to conjure up objections to His character that they might have pretext for putting Him to death.

Jesus was sinless. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Yet in His human life He lived a life of prayer like yours and mine, and was humbly dependent on His Father. Having set such an example, He said: "Follow Me." "Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Be perfect by having your hearts emptied of sin and filled with love. Be perfect finites even as your Father is a perfect Infinite. He does not command us to attain to Divine perfection, nor to angelic perfection, nor even to ideal perfection as men, but to have the love of God so enthroned within our hearts that our characters and lives will exemplify it in all relations. Jesus commanded us to love God with *all our hearts,* and our neighbors as ourselves. This is perfect love.

Jesus said to the young man, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Again: "If thou will be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." The particular thing in his case which

was keeping him from the fullness of the Divine life he was to put away. With some it is property; with others, pleasure; with others, sinful tempers; with others, acquired selfishness; but whatever may mar our perfection as disciples of the Lord Jesus we are to put away.

Many stagger at the term perfection in Christianity; because they think that what is implied in it is inconsistent with a state of probation, and savors of pride and presumption; but, as Dr. Adam Clarke says, "We must take good heed how we stagger at any word of God; and much more how we deny or fritter away the meaning of any of His sayings, lest He reprove us, and we be found liars before Him." Speaking of this Christian perfection he says: "Had I a better word, one more energetic, one with a greater plenitude of meaning, one more worthy of the efficacy of the blood that bought our peace and cleanseth from all unrighteousness, I would gladly adopt and use it. Even the word 'perfection' has, in some relations, so many qualifications and abatements that can not comport with that full and glorious salvation recommended in the Gospel and bought and sealed by the blood of the cross, that I would gladly lay it by, and employ a word more positive and unequivocal in its meaning, and more

worthy of the merit of the infinite atonement of Christ, and of the energy of His almighty Spirit; but there is none in our language, which I deplore as an inconvenience and a loss."

St. John did not "stagger" at this word perfection, but on the contrary, used it as the only term which could express a supreme fact. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." This language clearly shows that the loving apostle considered it spiritually natural that all believers should be made "perfect in love."

And so it was with St. Paul. Not one bit did that mighty logician "stagger" at this common Scriptural word which seems to have offended so many. He used it without a quaver in his voice or a halt in his speech. The supreme aim of his ministry was to "present every man perfect in Christ." In his letter to the Thessalonians he speaks of them as having "faith and labor of love," as the "elect of God," as having "much as-

surance and joy in the Holy Ghost," so that they were "ensamples to all that believe;" and yet he expresses a desire to see them that he might "perfect that which was lacking in their faith," to the end that the Lord might "establish their hearts unblamable in holiness before God."

Paul was always writing in just this style. He desired that all his parishioners should be sanctified wholly. He regarded this wonderful doctrine as the crowning glory of the Gospel. He gives us the word and example of leaving first principles and of going on to perfection. His last words to the Hebrew brethren, written after St. James and other apostles had suffered martyrdom, and when he knew his own end was near, rang out clear and strong for the perfected life: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight."

There is but one passage in all Paul's writings which can be construed as a confession that he himself was not a perfect Christian. Here it is: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend

that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii, 12-14.) The meaning of this passage all turns upon what Paul considered "the prize." The context shows that he was speaking of knowing Christ and the "power of His resurrection," "if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Not as though he had already attained; but he followed after. He was bound to have a fellowship in the sufferings and triumph of his Lord. The glory of the resurrection life was the "prize" he was seeking. And he adds, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." The plain meaning of the entire passage is that, in reference to the experiences beyond his mortal career, he had not yet attained, but he "followed after," while in the present experiences of grace he, with others, was "perfect." Our Lord used similar language in reference to His earthly humiliation: "I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."

Paul presented in his experience all the character-

istics of a perfected Christian life. He had a contented mind, a humble heart, a pure conscience, a burning love for God and souls, a submissive disposition, a fruitful life, and a readiness to meet death.

There is only one recorded incident in his whole career that can be construed as contrary to the doctrine of Scriptural holiness, and that incident occurred when he was on trial for his life. (Acts xxiii, 1-5.) But I have never blamed him much for the spirited rebuke he administered to Ananias. That was an instance in which he could be angry and sin not. Besides, when reminded of his alleged offense, he offered his apology, thereby showing himself to be a perfect gentleman as well as a perfect Christian.

Paul did not believe in willful sinning. He declared that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" but he speaks of believers as having been "made free from sin and become servants of God, and as having fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life." He could say with John, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Hear this, ye who make light of this gracious doctrine and plead for sin as a necessity in human nature and consistent with the Christian name. He who deliberately sins

is a servant of Satan, and thereby proves that the spirit of the devil is in him, and not the Spirit of Christ, for Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. The devil sinneth from the beginning. He was the father of sin. He brought sin into the world, and maintains sin by living in the hearts of those who do not resist him, leading them into transgression and persuading them that there is no deliverance from sin in this life.

Sin is the only thing which mars Christian perfection. The inevitable mistakes of frail humanity do not necessarily rob us of holiness. The innumerable temptations to which we are subjects do not necessarily spot our characters. Sin is in yielding.

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin."

St. Augustine defined temptation as a thought, an imagination, a delight, an assent. Temptation is easy to resist at the first two points, but difficult afterward. Sin is transgression. It is the willful, reckless violation of a known law. The true Christian does not sin. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."

Christian perfection is no more nor less than de-

liverance from the disposition to commit sin; that is, to disobey God, and the enjoyment of that inward fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ which is promised to all believers. To be filled with God is a great thing; to be filled with the fullness of God is still greater; but to be filled with all the fullness of God is the greatest of all, and is the highest mark of Christian character on earth.

The conception of the possibility of such a life, and the recognition of it as taught in the Scriptures, is what gave distinction to the Wesleys and the early Methodists. In Luther's mind, justification was the central idea; in Calvin's, the decrees; but Wesley viewed Christianity as a scheme for perfect redemption, and the doctrine of perfect love became the formal principle of his theology. "It," he says, "is the grand depositum which God has given to the people called Methodists, and chiefly to propagate this, it appears, God has raised them up." Methodism was born to propagate this truth. The "Holy Club" was formed at Oxford in 1729 to seek, gain, perpetuate, and proclaim the doctrine of a holy life. The Wesleys there sought perfection, and Whitefield joined them for that purpose. There never would have been a Methodist Church, but for the Bible doctrine and experience of perfect love. Dr.

George Peck averred that "the doctrine of entire sanctification, as a distinct work wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, is the great, distinguishing doctrine of Methodism. This given up, and we have but little left which we do not hold in common with other evangelical denominations."

The early Methodists were as much distinguished by their earnestness in seeking sanctification by faith as a distinct work of grace as they were by seeking justification by faith. Holiness was pressed upon them by the preachers as their present privilege, and the preachers in turn were urged by Mr. Wesley to "preach perfection to believers constantly, urgently, and explicitly." In a letter to Mrs. Bennis he said of a certain brother: "I hope he is not ashamed to preach full salvation, receivable now, by faith. This is the word which God will *always bless,* and which the devil peculiarly hates; therefore he is constantly stirring up both his own children and the weak children of God against it." In a letter to another he said that "if a man is not a thorough friend to Christian perfection he will easily puzzle others, and thereby weaken, if not destroy, any select society." He said further: "If we can prove that any of our local preachers or leaders, either directly or indirectly, speak against this doctrine, let

him be a local preacher or leader no longer. I doubt whether he should continue in the society; because he that can speak thus in our congregations can not be an honest man."

In his sermons and exhortations Mr. Wesley always presented this theme in its most attractive and beautiful life. More than one-half of the hymns he composed are upon the subject of holiness. He never faltered, even to his dying day, either in public or private, in exhorting the people to expect pardon or holiness *to-day*, and not *to-morrow*. And I believe that, were he alive to-day and ministering to this great American Church, he would proclaim this truth just as strongly, fearlessly and clearly as he did in England more than a century ago. Nothing would daunt him. Opposition would only inflame his zeal, and persecution would only settle him in the conviction that men need holiness to keep them from being fiends. Mr. Wesley desired his ministers to continue to preach holiness to the end of time.

Dr. Adam Clarke said that if the Methodists gave up preaching entire sanctification, they would soon lose their glory. "This fitness," said he, "to appear before God, and thorough preparation for eternal glory, is what I plead for, pray for, and heartily recommend to all true believers."

34332

Bishop Asbury writing to Henry Smith, said: "Preach sanctification directly and indirectly in every sermon." To another he exclaimed: "O, purity! O, Christian perfection! O, sanctification! It is heaven below to feel all sin removed. Preach it, whether they will hear or forbear. Preach it!"

Dr. Lovick Pierce, in a sermon before the Southern Methodist General Conference, reflected that "Just so far as our Church has ceased to believe in entire sanctification and to seek after it as the only phase of religion revealed in the New Testament that saves us from all sin, just so far are we a corrupted and God-forsaken Church, and it is useless to try to sustain ourselves on what we have been." This is true. The great things our fathers did will not atone for our dereliction. Because they proclaimed hell fire for sinners, and heaven for saints alone, will not excuse us in neglecting to declare the whole counsel of God.

True, some will scoff at this doctrine. These we must "warn." Dangerous is the condition of that man who can make light of, or sneer at, a doctrine which is calculated to take us out from the grip of the devil and fit us for companionship with God and the angels. Others will listen in respectful silence, or eagerly inquire for more of the truth. These we

are to "teach in all wisdom." My own experience is that all earnest Christians are waiting and hoping for fearless presentation by all ministers of the deep things of God.

But who is sufficient? Any minister can study this doctrine, and in Bible figure and language present it to his people for their edification. He is best fitted, however, who knows the truth, not only in mind but in heart, and can urge forward all seekers in the path which he himself hath trod, saying, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." Wonderful is the power which this experience gives to every minister of Christ!

Let me present two witnesses, one from each of the two leading branches of Methodism.

Speaking of his sanctification, Dr. Alfred Cookman wrote: "The evidence in my case was as direct and indubitable as the witness of sonship vouchsafed at the time of my adoption into the family of heaven. Need I say that the experience of sanctification inaugurated a new epoch in my religious life? Some of the characteristics of this higher life were blessed rest in Jesus, a clearer and more abiding experience of purity through the blood of the Lamb. What a conscious union and constant communion with God; what increased power to do and to suffer the will of

my Father, a steadier growth in grace; what delight in the Master's service; what fear to grieve the infinitely Holy Spirit; what love for and desire to be with those who love holiness; what access and confidence in prayer; what interest and comfort in religious conversation; what illumination and joy in the perusal of the blessed Word; what increased unction and power in the pulpit!"

Dr. W. B. Godbey, of the Kentucky Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who had a clear conversion and an unmistakable call to the ministry, says that after his conversion he wandered in the wilderness nineteen years, during fifteen of which he preached the gospel, his heart incessantly the scene of a terrible civil war. But in 1858 he was sent to a circuit where he found some people who enjoyed more religion than he did. He soon found they were praying for him. But he had no sympathy with the doctrine of holiness as a distinct experience, and regarded its advocates as fanatics. But the Holy Spirit led him into the light. "My weary soul," he says, "found rest, happy rest, in the arms of Jesus. And where is now the war? The battle is fought, the victory is won, the field is silent. Fifteen years have rolled away since that pentecostal baptism, but the sacred fire still flashes from the crown of my head

to the soles of my feet. My ministerial character has undergone a radical revolution. I was never before a revivalist, but since that memorable epoch five thousand souls have professed conversion and several sanctifications at my meetings."

These testimonies are clear. They speak a tremendous fact in possible Christian experience. They argue no theory and specify no method, but they do set forth a condition happy to occupy and blessed in its convergences.

As ministers we need this experience. It will make our preaching effective. It is the basis of pulpit triumph. David prayed for it (Psa. li, 10-13), knowing that, with his own heart clean, he could teach transgressors the law and lead sinners into saving grace.

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." Be ye innocent that warn others of guilt. Be ye rescued that lift danger signals before the eyes of the perishing.

VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SECRET OF A SATISFIED LIFE.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."
—Psa. xxv, 14.

The true Christian has a secret, a great secret, a precious secret, a secret worth guarding. His secret is, in part, knowledge that he is visited of God. Christians have prayed as David did, "Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine, and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted," and they have found their prayers answered. God visits men on earth. He comes in Spirit power to save and comfort. He speaks to the heart. Those that listen to His voice and bid Him stay, come into communion with Him. They find themselves the hosts of a Divine Guest, and thus discover the greatest secret of satisfied life possible to man. They may not be able to explain it so that the ungodly can understand; for the secret of the Lord is with them

that fear Him. Soul communion is spiritually discerned. The carnal mind can not comprehend it. But its effects are visible. Character is thus transformed, and the life takes on new loveliness and purity. The communing soul is sure of its ground. There is a direct intercommunion of mind with mind, between the creature and God, of which the soul is just as conscious as it is of its own operations in the normal flow of life.

Often the Christian would like this fact to be known to the world, in accordance with the thoughts of the Psalmist: "Show me a token for good, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me." The apprehension of the present Comforter and Helper is so impressive and powerful to the Christian that he would fain have the ungodly appreciate its truth. How good it is to have the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" descend to a direct intercommunion with our minds, so that, while we do not see His face in visible manifestation, we know we have "a place by Him," and as "His glory passes by," He "puts us in the cleft of the rock," and "covers us with His hand while He passes by." Then "He takes away His hand," and reveals to us such views and features of His character as

we are able to bear. We commune with Him. We become acquainted with His thoughts, feelings, and will in respect to us, something, perhaps, as ours are known to Him. We feel that He is not afar off. He is nigh. He is thinking about us, whispers His consolation and encouragement, bids us go forward in well-doing, assures us of His love, and in a thousand ways makes us the conscious subjects of His loving regard. Thus our cup of blessedness is full. The river of life rises up in our souls and bears us onward toward the ocean of eternal peace. Our minds become invigorated by this wonderful spiritual knowledge, so that we understand much truth which before was mysterious. Our faith grows stronger, our love increases, our hope brightens. "Old things pass away; all things become new." We feel that we have just begun to learn how to live. We sing unto the Lord a new song. We begin to bless His name, and show forth His salvation from day to day. We willingly bring an offering and come into His courts, and we strive to worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Our apprehensions of His presence and perfections are distinct and vivid. Our sense of His fullness of grace and love is satisfactory and abiding. We are conscious that in Him we possess infinite treasures. He is our shield and our

exceeding great reward. Our prayers are now enriched. We speak to a present God, who is all attention to our requests. His heart is moved with our hearts. We are one with Him. Our "joy is full." We "have power with God." We stand in that relation to Him which the righteous sustains, so that we "can dispute with Him." The promises are now "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus." We know what it is to "speak to God face to face," and to plead with Him in importunate and prevailing supplication. The Bible becomes a new book. Every sentence and word seems aflame with life. A new and hitherto hidden meaning bursts forth from every page. We discover that it is in truth the Word of God. It not only tells about God, but reveals His character and makes known His way. Our fellow Christians, too, seem more interesting to us. We are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. All who enter into this blessed realization have complied with the requirements of God. They have become humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at His word. They have by faith entered the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and have become "pure in heart." They love the Savior and keep His commandments. They seek the Lord with all their hearts. They never give up until con-

scious that Christ has come to them and made His abode with them. God thus becomes "mindful of them and visits them." God is their "everlasting light, and the days of their mourning are ended."

Mrs. Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, a Brahmin lady of India, who is a zealous missionary among her own country-women, composed some verses which not only prove her familiarity with the Muse, but, what is better, her close touch of soul with the Infinite Savior. The poem was brought to the attention of the American public by the *Heathen Woman's Friend,* and it strikingly illustrates the power of the Gospel to bring the pagan mind into the knowledge of the Divine Secret:

"In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide!
O how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low,
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.

When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His wing
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring;
And my Savior rests beside me as we hold communion sweet—
If I tried I could not utter what He says when thus we meet.

Only this I know—I tell Him all my doubts, and griefs, and fears;
O how patiently He listens, and my drooping soul He cheers!
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false friend would He be
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see!

Do you think that I could love Him half so well, or as I ought,
If He did n't tell me plainly of each sinful deed and thought?
No; He is very faithful, and that makes me trust Him more,
For I know that He does love me, though He wounds me very sore.

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow, this shall then be your reward:
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place,
You must mind and bear the image of your Master in your face.

You will surely lose the blessing and the fullness of your joy,
If you let dark clouds distress you, and your inward peace destroy.
You may always be abiding, if you will, at Jesus' side;
'In the secret of His presence' you may every moment hide."

But there is another part of this Christian secret which is quite as satisfying as the foregoing; viz., the knowledge that the believer can do something

for God. In a sense we can do nothing for God. He is supreme in power and authority, complete in character and glory. Man's work can not add to His infinite sufficiency. But in matters of grace, God accommodates Himself to our need, and makes it possible for us to serve Him. He has so constituted us that we can be well satisfied only when serving. Hence He calls us "co-workers," and He expects us to take a place in His vineyard and do something while we live. We are to help ourselves by helping others. We are to forge ahead by doing good. We are to make progress by obeying the laws of progress. Now, the laws of progress are these:

1. Keeping faith alive. Faith may be cultivated and nurtured. Doubt should be guarded against. The evidences of truth should be kept fresh in mind. The realization of saving grace should be momentarily retained. Lady Maxwell says, "The Lord teaches me that it is by simple faith alone that I can either obtain, retain, or increase with regard to any Gospel blessing."

2. Always doing something for the Master. Set a perfect example. Deny yourself needless indulgences. Fill up your life with holy, practical, sensible labors. Talk with others about religion, and talk like a man or woman. Don't be "goody-

goody," but be cheerful, pleasant, and deeply in earnest. Help the weak. Relieve the distressed. Find out fit cases for practical philanthropy, and tell other Christians about them.

3. Persistently watching against Satan. "We are not ignorant of his devices." Whether the devil is a person or a condition or a principle matters little, but whether he trips you up matters much. Keep out of his grip. Watch your thoughts. Hold your temper. Guard your speech. Give no occasion in any way for the enemies of God to blaspheme.

4. Diligently worshiping God. Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is an excellent way to keep God's life in the heart. Men rarely backslide in prayer-meeting. Preaching is a source of almost unfailing profit to the hearer. The testimony meeting is helpful by way of commitment to God. Any kind of social service is better than none. Be a worshiper.

5. Pouring your money into channels of usefulness. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Give more cash to the club, or lodge, or resort than you do to the Church, and the result will be less love for the house of God than for some other things.

6. Trying constantly to enlist recruits for Christ.

He who saves others promotes his own safety. He who warms another brightens his own fire. There is no surer way of keeping right with God and with conscience than by maintaining the evangelistic practice. Men never send their own souls to hell by helping other souls to heaven. A soul may be lost in spite of good works, but more souls are lost without good works than with them.

And there is still another part of this Christian secret which can not be ignored; viz., we gain ground in grace in proportion as we use grace already given. This is the meaning of such expressions as "He giveth more grace" and "grace for grace." Saving faith is appropriative as well as perceptive, and its appropriation must measurably equal its perception ere new views of possible advancement in grace are given. No one ever heard of a secular and carnal man making great discoveries in the vital experiences of the Divine life. He may have a clear conception of what the life of faith is; indeed, this light is given to all who have the Gospel; but until he walks in this light, using it in practical ways for his own good and for the good of others, he will not receive new gifts of heavenly radiance, nor stronger unfoldings of the spiritual life. Walk in the light and thou shalt see thy pathway illumi-

nated as thou proceedest; but turn aside, refusing to obey the mandates of the Spirit, and thou shalt see thy path beclouded and impenetrable darkness settling over thy spiritual vision. This is the reason why so many persons, who have for a time enjoyed the cheering and illuminating influences of the Spirit, have afterwards become doubtful, critical, cynical, and even morose. They sinned against light and knowledge. They did not absorb into their characters the rich spiritual elements that God had bestowed upon them, and thus they lost strength and standing.

Spiritual growth implies a constant appropriation of the elements that contribute to growth, just as a tree or plant absorbs the elements from earth and air and water which maintain it in vigorous life. A professed Christian, or an enlightened but unrenewed sinner, is like a dead or dying tree, illustrating all the various stages of decay and decline. Some are dead only at the top, the lower branches still bearing leaves or even fruit. Some are dead at the root, the very marrow of their faith being chilled and sapless. Whatever their state of decline, they are in an unsatisfactory and dangerous condition. It is always dangerous to be diseased and dying. Any withered and drooping object in the vegetable

world excites our pity; much more so in the animal world; still more so in human life; and still more so in the life that allies the soul to God and opens the gateway of eternity. Nothing more arouses our respect and admiration, whether we be Christians or sinners, than a strong, consistent, devoted, and growing Christian character. We know that it is honorable and praiseworthy to obey God, to do His will, to believe on His Son, to love His Word, to push His work, and to keep in tune with all that is sweetest and best in the dispensation of His Spirit. The growing Christian is the shining Christian, the influential and powerful Christian.

"They go from strength to strength
Through this dark vale of tears,
Till each o'ercomes at length,
Till each in heaven appears;
O glorious seat! Thou God, our King,
Shall thither bring our wandering feet."

And a final part of this consoling secret is the discovery that life is valuable, not so much for what we can get out of it, as for what we can put into it. This view kills the vigor of selfishness at one blow, and lifts altruism into the eminence of a primary duty. How can we put anything into life? By care-

fully husbanding its resources, we can extend its time to the utmost. By diligently cultivating its powers we can make them more efficient. By constantly employing its gifts we can augment their usefulness. By studying the needs of others, and ministering to those needs, we can make life more attractive to our fellows, and thus put into the aggregate of it a greater fullness of blessing. By throwing ourselves into the Lord's work we can render His cause more formidable to its enemies and more encouraging to its friends, thus serving a happy part in the universal stewardship of humanity. From these active ways we shall be deriving good, as well as doing good. Discipline, which is all we can really get out of life at best, will be promoted by service.

In the New Testament, service is the biggest word. Sacrifice to God is mentioned as only "a reasonable service." Paul speaks of doing service to the Lord with "good will;" that is, resolutely, stoutly, unswervingly, and constantly. Jesus taught that we must serve God only, that service can not be divided, and that if we would follow Him we must forsake all. Our Lord threw His whole life into service. It is enough that the servant shall be as his Lord. Jesus put everything of value into life, and it would seem as if He got nothing out of it

but humiliation, pain, and death. How His service has enriched the world! Going about continually doing good, He inspired humanity as it had never been inspired before with ambition for usefulness and all-controlling desire to lift up the world. And the power of His character and might of His words are still pouring into life with a steady stream, enlarging human thought, quickening all holy activity, and giving to mankind more wholesome views of worship, sacrifice, devotion, and philanthropy.

Without redemption human nature is essentially selfish. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the former is told, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." Worldliness takes "good things" out of life, and puts none in. Christlikeness puts good things into life, and takes none out. Every principle, motive, and condition of happy living is benefited and ennobled by a life patterned after that of Christ. Therefore Paul counted not his life dear unto himself so that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry he had received. To fulfill his mission was his supreme aim; not to eat and drink and pursue pleasure, but to utilize strength and make it count for God. Every example of martyr, apostle, reformer, evangelist, and practical Christian worker since the Church was founded

points to the idea of value put into life rather than value extracted from it. Salvation itself is a divine element put into life through the exercise of penitence and faith, rather than a quantity taken out of life by compliance with God's law. All that we take with us into the next world—viz., character redeemed and perfected—will be the fruit of sowing and planting, cultivating and laboring, believing and sacrificing, or, in other words, putting all we can into life as it passes.

VIII.

A PLEASANT FINAL ADIEU.

"The time of my departure is at hand."
—2 TIM. IV, 6.

USUALLY there is a dread at departing for any long journey, and the more so when it is a journey that can never be retraced. But here is a man who speaks of his own final departure from this world as composedly as if the trip were to be only for a day; knowing, too, that the departure would be attended by violence and other terrifying aspects. "I am now ready to be offered," he exclaims, as if the "offering" were the merest incident in his long and eventful life. He does not dwell upon the thought of "departure," nor even upon the dreadful tragedy that was to accompany it, as if these were principal things, but he does make the matter of being "ready" and the "time" then at hand the subject of remark. With him a correct moral condition and the nearness of eternity were of greater moment than the act of

Nero's swordsman or the mere period of future duration.

Paul was "ready." This was the main thing. His "time" had come. With resignation amounting to joy he hails the moment of his last leavetaking, saying it appeared "far better" than to stay. Reviewing his past with complacency, he could face his future with solid comfort. And in this does he not set an example for us to follow? Is it not possible for all mortals so to adjust themselves to the situation in life and death as to be perfectly reconciled to either, as Providence may order? I think so, and it is my purpose on this occasion to note some of the considerations by which victory over death is won.

We are told, by men who ought to know, that physical death is painless; that the snapping of the heart-strings is simply a figure of speech. The cessation of movement in the vital organs is only another phase of natural order. All suffering is supposed to imply a struggle of life against disease or calamity. In death this struggle gradually ends as life ebbs away, and at the last ceases to be.

Even in case of violent death it is said that "the pain suffered is not due to death, but to the vitality of full health, since the suffering from acts of vio-

lence which are the most nearly fatal is usually less than the suffering from those which, though dangerous, do not appear to undermine equally the vital strength. It is not the man who suffers in being disembodied; it is the body which suffers before the man can be disembodied; and the suffering grows less, not greater, as life in the body dwindles."

Yet death is feared, terribly feared. Humanity can not get used to it, or at least so used to it as not to dread it. The mind will inquire, How shall I feel when dying? What is there beyond? What is to be my experience in the spirit world? Will my last adieu be pleasing to myself and satisfactory to the friends I must leave behind me? From any point of view, death is a most solemn event. It separates friends, breaks up families, depopulates nations. No other event has occupied human thought with so much seriousness.

"Sure 't is a serious thing to die, my soul!
What a strange moment it must be, when near
Thy journey's end!—thou hast the gulf in view—
That awful gulf, no mortal e'er repassed
To tell what 's doing on the other side.
Nature runs back, and shudders at the sight,
And every life-string bleeds at thought of parting;
For part they must,—body and soul must part;

Fond couple; linked more close than wedded pair;
This wings its way to its Almighty source,
The witness of its actions, now its judge;
That drops into the dark and noisome grave,
Like a disabled pitcher, of no use."

And from the decree of Death there is no appeal. The grim monster reigns an absolute monarch over every child of man. Old and young, good and bad, useful and worthless, must respond to his summons. Protest is useless; rebellion is vain. It is one of the revealed glories of the future world that, in it, "there shall be no more death." Until we reach that world, "we have the sentence of death in ourselves."

But Death is not equally a "King of terrors" to all persons. Infants sink into his arms without a sense of horror. The aged also ripen for his long-dreaded harvest. To the pure and good he is robbed of his sting. Those who have lived long, and have been useful, frequently smile at his approach, while those whose lives are full of suffering often "long for death," and "seek for it more than for hid treasures."

The prophet Isaiah (xxv, 8) intimates that Death is to be subdued. He sees the vision of the mountain in which the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people a feast of fat things, destroy the shadowy

covering that has filled them with gloom, remove the veil that was spread over all nations, swallow up death in victory, and wipe away tears from off all faces.

The Gospel is the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy. Calvary's mountain is the scene of the supreme struggle. The face of the covering was there torn away. The veil that was spread over all nations was there rent asunder. The conqueror of death there proclaimed the beginning of His triumph, and under His benign and graceful sway the tears of sorrow are being wiped from off all faces.

Gospel grace alone is an assuagement for grief. The hope of endless life is the only substantial consolation. "He that believeth in Me shall never die," is the most comforting message that ever fell on dying ear. "Thy dead men shall live," is the most comforting prophecy that ever fell on living ear. Instinctively, we love to live; naturally, we dread to die. Under grace we may be led to say, "For me to live is Christ; to die is gain."

Dying people usually think most about what has chiefly engaged their attention in life. Two individuals, each noted for success in his chosen sphere—the one a great general, the other a teacher—were nearing the shores of the other world. The last

words of the soldier were, "Head of the army," and the last order of the teacher was, "It is getting dark; dismiss the school."

Sometimes, when we hear of a man's death, we ask, "How did he die?" A more relevant question would be, "How did he live?" The thoughts that occupy the mind and the emotions that stir the heart in life have much to do with the experience in death.

This leads to the inquiry, What are the principles and conditions by which victory over death is won?

1. As a preparatory thought, there must be early recognition of the truth that we can not stay on earth always. This is not our abiding home. The earth is not large enough to contain a deathless race. Its surface would soon be literally covered with flesh were the creature world, or even man alone, not under the law of death. We must recognize as an arrangement of Providence the conditions by which one generation passeth and another cometh. And we must learn to be acquiescent under the decree by which we each enjoy our little day of life and then join the company of those who have occupied before us.

2. There must be early consecration of our powers to the task of accomplishing the mission we have on earth. No well-balanced mind can regard

human life as a missionless existence. We are not here by chance. We are not born simply to die. There is meaning in consciousness. There is duty in the "ought" of conscience. There is untold significance in the felt satisfaction that follows a high and constant endeavor to be and do all that we know we should. The conviction that man's life has purpose in it is not dying out. On the contrary, the history of a hundred generations only tends to establish the truth of the ancient concept that man is "a living soul," environed now by probationary conditions, and destined to an eternal unfolding. "Life is a mission," says Mazzini, the Italian patriot and revolutionist. "Every other definition of life is false, and leads all who accept it astray. Religion, science, philosophy, though still at variance upon many points, all agree in this, that every existence is an aim."

If this be true, if every life has infinite meaning in it and eternal destiny before it, how important that in its very first unfolding it be placed in line with its own true purpose, and that all its powers be employed in the execution of the Creator's designs in giving that life a time and place upon the earth. So lofty a conception compels the conclusion

that with so much to do and so little time, we have not a moment to waste nor one talent to fold up in a napkin. We must be doing our work. We must be discharging duty, improving privilege, bearing obligation, and otherwise ministering to this innate conviction that to be ready for death we must make the most of life; that if we would have triumph over our last enemy we must likewise subdue our first and most constant opponent, the disposition to be selfish, idle, and unconcerned while precious moments fraught with immortal possibilities are hurrying past. Rousseau said that "all that time is lost which might be better employed." What waste of days, therefore, do the lives of idlers and triflers represent! O, be doing, friend! Waste no moment. "Who murders time, he crushes in the birth a power ethereal."

3. To come into harmony with God and be the happy subjects of His will is to learn the highest lesson a mortal may know upon this earth.

There are two ways: One is foolishly to struggle against the inevitable, to resist the irresistible, to fight fate, to learn to hate God, become embittered at fortune, dissatisfied with life, and at enmity with all things good; and the other is to learn what exist-

ence means, revere its Author, accept its possibilities gladly, acquiesce in its order, and conform to its law, and to say, under all circumstances beyond our control, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

The first way is not the preparation for final triumph, but for inglorious defeat. "Who art thou that repliest against God?" We can as easily stop the fury of a cyclone and control the movements of the wind, as we can stay the hand of Providence or alter the laws which govern life. Our very helplessness points out the course of wisdom. We must accept the earthly situation, and make the most of our opportunities. To be reconciled to God, submissive to His will, obedient to His commands, in love with His ways, and contented with His allotments, is to illustrate a correct philosophy. He gets the most out of life, puts the most into it, and is best prepared to leave it, who adjusts himself to his surroundings and practically makes conspicuous Paul's observation, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." All the biographies of saints, the histories of Churches, the records of

great reform movements, and the testimonies of the Christian ages combine to give emphasis to the truth that man was made for God, and finds his richest consolation both in life and in death in doing what God requires and in being ready on call to resign his spirit into the hands of God who gave it.

4. In the provisions and promises of the Gospel are to be found those elements of truth and power and life which enable men to settle themselves, to find soul-rest, and to fulfill the manifest purpose of existence.

This proposition needs no argument. The Christian scheme has world-wide acceptance. Its supporters include the wisest and best of earth. It is the only religion that commands serious attention among the enlightened nations. Beauty of precept, power of principle, and purity of conception there may be in other religious systems; but grace to save, balm to heal, truth to inspire, life to energize, and motive to arouse,—these alone, or chiefly, are to be found in the teachings of the Man of Nazareth and in the examples and records which preceded or followed His career upon the earth.

"Christianity," says Hannah More, "bears all the marks of a Divine origin; it came down from

heaven, and its gracious purpose is to carry us up thither. Its author is God. It was foretold from the beginning, by prophecies, which grew clearer and brighter as they approached the period of their accomplishment. It was confirmed by miracles, which continued till the religion they illustrated was established. It was ratified by the blood of its Author; its doctrines are pure, sublime, consistent; its precepts just and holy; its worship is spiritual; its service reasonable, and rendered practicable by the offers of Divine aid to human weakness. It is sanctioned by the promise of eternal happiness to the faithful, and the threat of everlasting misery to the disobedient."

To support such a system, to help to establish it, to give it right of way and the swing of conquest, to accept its benefits and extend its blessings, is to give to our lives a value worth treasuring, a love worth cultivating, a meaning worth investigating, and a satisfaction and glory worth cherishing. No man has found his true sphere of endeavor who, with this light before him and upon him, has still rejected it; who, with these blessings around him and within him, has still disowned them; who, with this power after him and above him, has yet scorned to own the

truth or to make it the ruling principle of his life. Happy he, living or dying, who gives proof, by word and deed and bearing and character, that he has "Christ put on, the hope of glory formed within." His exit from the world is sure to be peaceful, if not beautiful.

The daughter of Governor Wright was dying. As she approached the last moment she said, "I 'm going up! I 'm going up on the ineffable glory!" What a glorious approach! To her husband she said, "O, if you could only see what I see, you would know why I long to go!" To her pastor, who was reading of the "valley of the shadow of death," she said, "There is no 'valley.'" The night preceding her death she abode in the third heaven of rapture; and being informed that her feet were in the Jordan of death, she said, "O, I am so glad!" Her last words were: "Jesus is peace."

When Rev. Frank Latimer McCoy, a bright and useful missionary to India, became satisfied, after a short illness, that his end was near, he said, "My Jesus, as Thou wilt." Later, when death was upon him, he cried out: "Lift me up! Bring in the lamp! Fan me! and I will show you how a Christian can die!"

A faithful preacher's wife who neared the dark waters said: "It 's morning. How light! How beautiful! Let me go quick!" Her son asked, "Where?" She replied, "To heaven; let me go quick!" These were her last words.

In accounting for the serenity and peace of the dying Christian, Rev. John Wesley said that it was simply the sequel to the calmness of spirit which distinguishes believers through life. "But," said he, "when they have nearly finished their course, this peace generally flows as a river, even in such a degree as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive." He cites a remarkable instance, that of Enoch Williams, one of the first of his preachers to die. He had received the Christian's peace when only eleven years old, and never lost it for an hour, and after rejoicing in God with joy unspeakable through the whole of his illness, said at the last, "Peace! peace!" and died.

When Miss Phebe Rowe, the devoted evangelist of India, sank to her rest at Naini Tal, she welcomed the messenger, saying "she was very tired." She could talk little, could not send messages to friends individually, but said: "Tell them all I love them. Give my love to everybody. I wanted to live only

for the work, but God will raise up others to look after the sheep in the wilderness." "God is good to me to let me die among these beautiful mountains." Then she sang:

"My sins are washed away
In the blood of the Lamb;
I have lost the fear of death
Through the blood of the Lamb."

When her pure and loving heart stood still, there had triumphantly passed away one of the sweetest spirits ever loaned to earth.